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PREFACE.

THERE are various signs that the subject treated in the following essay has of late been occupying the minds of many persons. It may be well to say that I was not attracted to it because of this, but independently, before I had noticed the fresh interest in it which seems to be awakening. Similar influences to those which have turned my thoughts to it have no doubt acted upon others. It must not be supposed, then, that I have been moved by the desire of combating some particular view that has been put forward ; rather, it has been my aim to consider the whole subject with some care.

At the same time, it may be permissible to note some of the circumstances which seem to make the discussion opportune. In the spring of last year, Dr. Martineau's book on *The Seat of*

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Religious Authority, was published. Its title does homage to the conviction that authority there must be, though its main object is to set aside what have commonly been held to be some of its highest sources. Not long afterwards we were forcibly reminded of the opposite pole of thought, through Cardinal Newman's death. Throughout his career, the question of the nature of faith and its foundations, including the grounds and character of true religious authority, was constantly before his mind. It is discussed in some of his most characteristic writings, and its consideration is intertwined with the whole history of his religious opinions. In this connexion, too, it may be observed that Dean Church's *Oxford Movement* will have made it apparent to those who did not realize it before, how prominent this topic—the right conception of authority, and its function in determining belief—was in the minds of the Tractarians generally.

A more immediately practical significance has been given to it by the appearance of *Lux Mundi*, and the criticisms passed upon it. One

THE
PLACE OF AUTHORITY
IN MATTERS OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEF

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

**THE JEWISH AND THE CHRISTIAN
MESSIAH.**

A STUDY IN THE EARLIEST HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

1 *Vol.* 8vo. 10s. 6d.

T. & T. CLARK.

THE
PLACE OF AUTHORITY
IN MATTERS OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEF

BY
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LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET

1891

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point specially remarked upon, as a defect in the scheme of the book, was the absence of any adequate treatment of the subject of authority. In the Preface to the Tenth Edition, Mr. Gore has justified this omission, by explaining the intention which the writers had. "Our purpose was 'to succour a distressed faith' by endeavouring to bring the Christian Creed into its right relation to the modern growth of knowledge, scientific, historical, critical; and to the modern problems of politics and ethics . . . It seems to us that a due regard to the point of view from which these studies were written would have obviated some of the criticisms upon them. For instance, it would have explained why we forbore to enter upon the questions which may be raised as to the seat and methods of Church authority. It was because these questions do not arise practically till the work has been done to which we were attempting to minister." Doubtless the writers, without even knowing it, have quietly given to not a few the help which they sought to give. But

it was natural, and almost inevitable, that the matter of chief interest in the book to people generally, and to the reviewers, should be the position of the writers themselves,—the combination of definite High-Churchmanship with an endeavour to sympathize with all earnest religious life, and all the world's great movements, and fairly and frankly to take account of the results of modern criticism. And probably the fact that they have taken up this position is in truth of far greater importance than anything they have said, although they have said many things well. Now, in this position of theirs, two principles are brought together which present apparently the sharpest contrast,—the principle of authority (which is evidently a real power in the minds of the writers, though they kept it in the background), and the principle of free inquiry. If the position is one that can be permanently held, if it is more than a halting-place, there must be some adjustment between these two. It is vital that this should be shown to be possible.

It is the aim of the present essay to endeavour to indicate such an adjustment. One has been present—I am sure—to the minds of the writers of *Lux Mundi*, though no one of them has as yet fully set it forth.¹ I am not entitled to speak for them; but I find myself in such general accord with them, that what I have written on this question may—I have considerable hope—represent, at least approximately, their view. If the present essay has any importance, it will probably arise from the fact that I am (as I believe) only one of many who have come, or are coming, to the same or a similar position to theirs through an opposite course. They, for the most part, began with the traditions of High-Church doctrine received from revered and beloved teachers, and which they have faithfully treasured. To me the recognition of the great idea, the great truth, of the Catholic Church, which must include the general notion (at least)

¹ The chapter on Church Authority in Mr. Gore's *Roman Catholic Claims* appears to me very valuable and suggestive; but he necessarily deals there only with one or two aspects of the subject.

of authority in matters of faith, has come last. But I am not conscious of feeling less urgently on this account the (to me) old claims that full right must be done to individual intuition and experience, and to scientific and historical truth ; though the effort to effect a reconciliation cannot but cause, at times, perplexity and distress.

V. H. S.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
August 22, 1891.

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CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE AND INTEREST OF THE SUBJECT.

THE subject of authority raises widely different questions, according as we contemplate it, in relation to the government of societies for purposes of united action, and control over the external conduct of its members, or in relation to the guidance and determination of opinion and belief.¹ The theory of the one may, indeed, run off into the other, especially in the case of religious societies; yet they are broadly distinct. It is with the latter alone that I propose to deal.

We are all chiefly familiar with the question of the

¹ In the opening words of the twentieth of the Thirty-nine Articles—"The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith"—the first clause relates to the former of these, the second to the latter. It was in the main with the former that Hooker was concerned in his controversy with the Puritans, who maintained that the Church, considered either as a spiritual society or a national institution, could not lawfully enjoin even ceremonies and constitutional arrangements, unless they could be shown to be prescribed in Holy Scripture.

place of authority in matters of belief as part of the controversy between the Church of Rome and those opposed to her. The assertion of the right of private judgment is—we are frequently told by writers of Protestant Germany and others who have departed widely from the dogmatic position of the fathers of the Reformation, or of their Puritan followers—the most essential characteristic of the Reformation, and the special enduring heritage which it has left. Now, the relative importance of different elements in a complex movement are always likely to be variously estimated by different minds, and the class of statements just referred to might well be criticized on the score of historical incompleteness. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the Reformation was itself broadly characterized by the exercise of free inquiry, coupled with the rejection of ecclesiastical authority, or that it has largely promoted that still more unfettered spirit of inquiry which has appeared among us since the last century. And thus Church authority and private judgment have come to be set over against one another as opposed principles, the true type of the former being held to reside in the Church of Rome, whatever weaker imitations of it may be found elsewhere.

This is the attitude of what may be described as

pure Protestantism. The Church of England has from the first held a position of her own, clear as to certain points, however vague as to others in regard to Church authority. The theory of this position which has attracted special attention of late, is that which has been set forth in connexion with the great Anglican revival of the past fifty years.¹ I will not stop to inquire how far this theory represents truly the spirit of the English Church, according to the character impressed upon her at the Reformation. There can at least be no doubt that it is in general accord with the teaching of a great line of her divines extending throughout the larger part of her history. Its governing principle is, that the guidance which the individual cannot find in reason or in Scripture alone, is to be sought in the consent of Catholic antiquity. Dr. Newman became dissatisfied with this view, after he had earnestly defended it. He felt especially the

¹ The following may be mentioned as utterances on the subject which have special importance :—Keble, *Primitive Tradition recognized in Holy Scripture*. A sermon on 2 Tim. i. 14, preached in the Cathedral Church of Winchester, at the Visitation of the Rev. W. Dealtry, Chancellor of the Diocese [with an appendix], 1836. Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church, viewed relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism*, 1837. Pusey, *The Rule of Faith, as maintained by the Fathers and the Church of England*. A sermon on 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. 1851. Third edition, with a preface on Papal Infallibility from Bossuet, 1878. To these might be added portions of Mr. W. Palmer *On the Church*, and Tract, No. 178, on *Tradition*, being a catena of passages from Anglican divines.

want in the English Church of a living authority, which spoke unambiguously on controversies of faith. It was *this* question of authority—authority in relation to belief—which more than any other occupied his mind and influenced him in connexion with his change of allegiance. And there can be no doubt that dissatisfaction with the English Church in this respect, at least as much as in regard to jurisdiction, and the validity of her Orders and Sacraments, has determined the action of the more thoughtful of those Anglicans who have taken the same step.

If the subject of authority in matters of religious belief had no importance beyond that derived from the antagonisms and controversies to which reference has just been made, it would still be of considerable interest. The great principles of a system which has gained and for long retained so vast an empire over the human mind, as that of Rome has done, cannot be treated with indifference. And there is an increasing disposition among those outside her, to regard her without bitterness, and even with a measure of sympathy, and to acknowledge that among her fruits there is much good, if there is also evil. But our subject is in truth very much wider. It is not difficult to perceive that the majority of those even who have been most strongly opposed to the Church of Rome, have

themselves acknowledged an authority in matters of faith,—that of the Bible. And this authority has been in recent times challenged, no less than that of the Church, and needs as much to be justified, if it is to be maintained. Moreover, the ultimate reasons which may be given for trusting either of these authorities are connected, and they cannot with perfect clearness of thought be considered apart.

It may be fancied, however, that those at all events who impartially reject alike the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Church can be consistent in their exclusion of every principle but that of private judgment from the sphere of belief. Yet they, too, are precluded from this, unless they are prepared to deny all possibility of the existence of a body of religious knowledge, beyond that which can be created by each individual for himself, within the limits of his own life. If there can be progress in religious knowledge, the idea of which is often mistakenly contrasted with that of authority, nay, if religious knowledge is to exist objectively at all, and not relatively to the individual consciousness alone, the principle of authority must enter, as it does in every other kind of knowledge. Indeed, we may say that only pure Agnostics can succeed in excluding it. For it would be practically

6 AGNOSTICS ALONE CAN EXCLUDE AUTHORITY.

impossible to acknowledge that religious truth can be attained by the study and the unguided intuitions of the individual, and not allow any increase of it through combined effort and communication. What do those who speak of a "religion of the future" mean, but that a new body of doctrine shall gradually be formed and gradually win the allegiance of mankind, which shall be capable of being accepted by the individual, and shall control and discipline his life. They think, it may be, that they can already indicate some of its main characteristics, but they do not dream that they can themselves supply it, of themselves alone. On the contrary, they yearn for its support in their own lives. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that they look for the creation, in time, of a new Bible and a new Church.

It may be true that they reject the notion of infallibility for any spiritual powers in the future, just as they deny that those established in the past have any claim to it; and that they may imagine a Bible whose canon would never be closed, and a Church the decrees of which would be always open to revision in the light of widening knowledge. But authority does not cease to be authority because it is not in all respects final and absolute. However authority may be checked and limited, the new forms of it will

exist in order to meet the same needs of man as the old ones.

Whether any infallible authority exists, and if so, what its extent may be, and its relation to the individual conscience and reason, we shall have to inquire. But supposing it granted that there is no infallible authority, it does not follow that there may not be one which, under given circumstances, may demand the obedience of our intellect or enter fitly into the grounds of our convictions. Those who trust most to the powers of the individual mind do not attribute infallibility to them. Just so authority, even where it is not infallible, may be an indispensable condition of knowledge.

There is an instance which will bring home to us still more forcibly the permanent place which authority must hold among the grounds of religious belief. Parents, and those whose responsibilities towards the young are similar to those of parents, by delegation from them, or otherwise, are brought face to face with this question. It may sound plausible that in matters of religious belief a man should exercise suspense of judgment till he can thoroughly assure himself what the truth is by adequate investigation. And I am very far from wishing to imply that there are not many religious

questions on which suspense of judgment is the befitting attitude, when our qualifications for judging are not such as to entitle us to form an opinion. But the good sense of nearly all sees that it is impossible to carry this out as a principle in the education of children with regard to the most fundamental religious beliefs. The end supposed cannot in fact be attained, because to be silent on these points, or to treat them as open questions, is to create a bias against them. The treasures of the past in this respect cannot be communicated, and the commendation with which they come to us cannot exercise its due influence, if we wait to approach them simply as a matter of intellectual study. This portion of our inheritance is conveyed by the gradual creation in us of principles of action and habits of mind, which give a certain way of looking at the facts of the world and of human nature. Moreover, it cannot be a matter of indifference for any individual whether he enters into actual possession of them or not, or how soon or late he does so. Religion is a practical thing of pressing importance for the spirit and conduct of life. The responsibility of teaching with authority has to be assumed, because the world would suffer if we did not. One who feels that he has only probability for his own moral and

religious convictions, or who has a deep sense of their imperfection, may yet hand them on as the best he has to give, the nearest approximation to the truth which he possesses. He is persuaded, at least, that the acquisition of this is the condition for further progress. At the same time, individuals may well question whether they have the right to engrain their own views, simply as being their own, in the plastic nature of others. This must seem to be an interference with another human personality and conscience, which even the relation of parents to their children does not warrant. Whether they are in agreement with surrounding opinion or opposed to it, they will be driven to throw themselves upon, or at least to desire, some authority outside of themselves to support and guide their action towards those committed to them.

Now, all this is more or less generally acknowledged in regard to the instruction of the young. But it is not so fully recognized that the majority of mankind *never* possess either the mental powers or the opportunities for arriving at an independent judgment either upon the evidence for facts involved in, or the notional forms of, their religious beliefs. For these they must and do depend on authority, and for the most part the authority of the instruction given them in youth; though the whole may be quickened, and

its truth in a certain sense and in varying degrees verified, by a living experience of its power. This is illustrated by what we may observe as to the effect of any particular kind of preaching, say that of some revivalist, on different minds. This difference is at least in part accounted for by differences of training. Those who are profoundly influenced will be found, I believe, most often to have learnt before, probably in childhood, the same religious views as the preacher's. Thus they readily admit his intellectual assumptions. They have always associated the idea of earnest religion with such language as he uses. They have not doubted that if they ever became religious, it would mean what he puts before them. Perhaps his words awaken the recollection of a state from which they have fallen. I am not calling in question the reality of that spiritual power which is taking possession of them. I urge only that there is a mould ready into which the molten fire is poured. They are not required first to break up this mould which has long been standing prepared. Other hearers he will not touch, or he will not obtain among them the kind of conversions for which he looks.

The old crude contrast between authority and private judgment falls, then, utterly to the ground. The great early exponents of the principles of the

Anglo-Catholic movement, in the opinion of the present writer, bring us far nearer to a just estimate of the true relations of these two powers. But it must be felt by many who are largely in sympathy with them, that the progress of historical study in this generation, while it has certainly not strengthened the main positions of Dr. Newman's *Essay on Development*,¹ has yet added force to some of his criticisms on the theory against which it was directed, especially as regards the kind of immobility of doctrine which that theory seemed to assume. Moreover, the need for a well-considered rationale of belief, which has arisen from the searching controversies in our own generation concerning the truth of Christianity, carries with it the necessity for a more careful grounding of any claims that are made for authority, and more exact definition of its true place, than we could expect to find, or do find, in an earlier time. Indeed, a clearer view of the nature and function of authority in matters of religious belief seems to be one of our urgent requirements at the present time. Anglicans do not seem for the most part to be in possession of any well-thought-out and consistent theory on the subject. They are in danger of assuming that the Church teaches with a precision and definiteness, which are not really as matter of

¹ Written in 1845, the year in which he joined the Church of Rome.

historical fact to be found outside the Church of Rome. And it is not then to be wondered at if they, or those who learn from them, are in danger of turning to the Church of Rome for the fulfilment of that ideal of authority which they have formed for themselves. To take a wider view: it should be the work of this age, with all its questionings of fundamental principles, to advance that branch of religious philosophy, which may be described as the Logic of Belief, the theory of the methods for attaining religious truth, and of the just grounds of religious conviction. The true place of authority is an important department of this subject. And it is my own conviction that a fuller perception of the true bearings of this question would prove a very powerful agent in the reconciliation of differences among Christians and in a general advance in spiritual knowledge and life.

We may define "Authority," for the purposes of the present discussion, as that principle which is exhibited in all reasons for receiving, or assenting to, a truth, if such there be, which are external to the man himself, to his own observation, reasoning, or intuition, or which, if revealed internally, lie beyond the reach of his own verification. Our range of view must be confined within no narrower limits than this, if we are to form an estimate of what may be justly claimed

for the principle of authority in things spiritual, and to see it in its true relation to the mental and moral constitution of man.

It is the chief aim of the following pages to contend for a recognition of the principle of authority which it does not ordinarily receive amongst us. Yet let it be here premised that we desire to be as jealous for the true rights of reason and of personal faith as of authority. It is not to be believed that there is in reality any antagonism between their functions, justly conceived. If there is a function for authority, it must consist in enabling reason to attain to a higher exercise of her own powers than she could unaided, or in meeting the individual reason, or the collective reason of mankind, on the threshold of a sphere where one or both of these fail. We cannot believe in any theory of things which sets forth the suppression of powers given to man by the Creator as a good in itself. It must be one test of the truth of any doctrine that it allows for the realization of all good, even natural good, that is potential in man's being. It is, we believe, the glory of Christianity that it renders this possible, and helps it forward, as nothing else can do. To demand that the mind of man shall be restrained from the use of his powers of investigation and thought in the sup-

posed interests even of such sacred things as humility and the spirit of obedience is to set our nature at war within itself. Humility and the spirit of obedience must be otherwise secured. That humility, at all events, can be, is shown where inquiry is freest, in the example of multitudes of eminent men of science. It would probably be found on a careful examination of instances that intellectual pride is most often associated with an exercise of reason more or less illegitimate even according to its own principles. Let such use as this by all means be corrected. It is true that owing to the moral imperfection of our nature, pride may be fostered even by the right exercise of reason; but some other remedy than its discontinuance must in general be found for this. A man may indeed do well in renouncing to a greater or less degree the use of intellectual powers of which he is conscious, either because it involves temptations which for him are overpowering, or because the call to immediately practical work is for him more pressing; just as it may be another man's wisdom and duty to abstain from the enjoyment of some more material good, because for him it has been corrupted, or because his doing so will render him more efficient for the service of God. But exceptions like these cannot limit the general movement of reason. No one will dare to say that

right reason can in the long run be other than a supporter of truth. It ought, then, to be suffered to do its work in its own way. In whatever direction it can, and to the utmost extent it can, it must be allowed to penetrate.¹ Further, whatever other development of man Christian teaching may endeavour to promote, it must certainly be its aim to promote his moral development. And the chief means of doing this is by quickening his sense of responsibility, and extending it more and more to the whole of his life. His faculties for testing and judging of the truth offered him form one great gift, for his use of which he is responsible. Any proposal to limit the extent of this responsibility, beyond what his lack of capacity and the circumstances appointed by Providence prescribe, and thereby to blunt the sense of it, bears the mark of falsity. It is impossible that he should evade a measure of responsibility for first choosing the authority to which he will submit. And it is difficult to see by what right responsibility can be made to cease there, if he has the means of testing the truth of the pronouncements which the authority makes. The grounds on which the claims of an authority in

¹ For an example of the way in which such considerations may be ignored, see Newman, *On Development*, ch. ii. §§ 2, 11 (pp. 86, 87) in new edition, and the sentence of Bellarmine, quoted with approval there.

matters of faith can be accepted have ever been admitted to be of the nature of probable evidence, and as such can never be complete. Probable evidence, even a low degree of it, as Bishop Butler has insisted, may afford as good ground for practical action as mathematical certainty would, and for action of the same firmness and consistency. A sufficient degree of it may also often rightly produce in the mind the temper of certainty. Yet the actual necessities of a man's position, his want of opportunities for acquiring fuller knowledge, will always enter as an element in this state of mind. If the way lies open to him for increasing the strength or mass of the evidence, he cannot well refuse to avail himself of it, for his own sake, that is, without imperilling his own feeling of certainty, and he ought not to refuse it for the sake of others. Now, to examine the decrees of an accepted authority by independent tests of truth is a means of strengthening and enlarging the reasons for which the authority itself may be believed.

That which has been said here in regard to the claims of reason, holds also with respect to those of the faith which arises through the enlightenment of the conscience and spiritual experience of the individual. Nothing must be suffered to impair the force of the testimony of individual faith to the reality of

spiritual things, or to hinder it from making its own contributions to the progress of spiritual knowledge.¹

The question of the true reconciliation of the claims of authority and independent conviction is one which varies from individual to individual, and from one period of the same individual's life to another, and differs for each branch of human knowledge or matter of opinion, in regard to which he may be constrained for one reason or another to adopt a definite attitude. It depends on the degree of his maturity, the extent of his knowledge and power of thought, and upon occupations, duties, and responsibilities. A question in which there is such a large personal element, varying for each case, must eminently be a "practical problem" —a problem that must be solved by the help of experience, where, also, the force of circumstances and that of inherent individual characteristics will often seem to take the task of settlement into their own hands. Nevertheless, the process would be better performed if there were more of self-observation and of the application, so far as possible, of guiding principles. In the case of most men, the adjustment is made in almost complete unconsciousness; many of those who most loudly proclaim the exclusive rights of private judgment are in reality the veriest slaves

¹ See Note A, "Intuitive Perception of Divine Truth."

of authority. And few indeed would seem to have any clear rational view of the functions of the two powers, in relation to one another. And while the problem has to be solved somehow by individuals in divers fashions, it has also broad characteristic features for successive ages. We are familiar with the thought that in the civil life of a nation terms must be arranged between authority and liberty, and that when an old form of authority has fallen before the rising spirit of liberty, authority must be re-established, even if on a new basis, in order that society may continue to exist. It is not less certain, in spite of what many clever people have for the last three centuries and more been saying, that in the realm of thought also, and in those departments of life which are largely under the control of opinion, the two principles must come to an understanding, mute if not expressed.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

WE shall be better prepared to examine the claims of spiritual authority in particular instances, such as those of the Bible and the Church, if we consider first, generally, the function which it may conceivably discharge, the extent to which it may be exercised, and the reasons for which it may be accepted, consistently with the laws to which the human mind is subject in the ascertainment of different kinds of truth.

We ask, then, what is the function of authority in the chief branches of human knowledge; and first, in mathematical and physical science? It is sometimes said that here authority has no place. This can only be maintained if by authority is meant either authority established in a formal manner, or authority which is not subject to revision. For it is unquestionable that there is such a thing as scientific authority, and that infallibility even is in many cases practically attributed to it.

We do not dream of calling in question the theorems

arrived at through trains of reasoning by mathematicians, and generally accepted among them; or facts and laws of nature which physical investigators are held, by those qualified to judge, to have established through observation and experiment. The reverence for this authority is not confined to the ignorant, and those wholly unskilled in the particular branches of reasoning and investigation. Rather it is apt to be more or less wanting in them, while it is especially strong in those whose minds have received any scientific culture, and who have acquired confidence in the methods employed by science. Even if we do not know why the quadrature of the circle is impossible, we do not care to waste time in attempting it, because such attempts are famous in the history of mathematics as an example of necessarily futile labour. Circle-squarers are now only found among those who have not had an opportunity of taking a proper measure of their own powers, and who are not only deficient in mathematical knowledge, but who even do not estimate rightly the weight to be attributed to the judgment of those who have it.

Through education it becomes inconceivable to us, that if we had the opportunity and ability to follow out to the end the courses of induction and deduction, which have led to generally accepted results,

we could arrive at different conclusions. We may have tested the evidence or reasoning up to a certain point, and so far the common judgment has probably seemed to us confirmed. If this were not the effect upon our minds, we should still feel little doubt that the error must lie with us, not with the masters of science, and the host of qualified students who have verified the soundness of their work. We might not feel able to rest till we had discovered the explanation of our discrepancy from them. We might hope that this might lead to a more exact statement of the doctrine, a better grouping of facts, or a more comprehensive law. But we should feel confident that the truth of what they had held to be proved would remain substantially unshaken.

This right trust in authority begins to be formed in the boy learning arithmetic, or elementary mathematics, or chemistry. If the answer to a question which he himself obtains does not agree with the answer given him by his text-book, or his teacher, he knows that it is by far the most probable that theirs is the right one, and sets himself to find out his mistake. Or if some chemical experiment which he has made does not turn out in the way he was led to expect, he does not doubt that there was something wrong in the manner in which he has conducted it.

Scientific authority may also be of different degrees of strength, according to the more or less complete unanimity of those who have a right to speak, and the measure of validity which they claim for the proof of any doctrine. No sane and educated person thinks of questioning the law of gravitation, or the truth of the theory of the motions of the heavenly bodies founded on it, even though he may not himself have gone through the observations and calculations and reasoning necessary to prove them. The theory of evolution, on the other hand, cannot be regarded as so thoroughly established. Yet, considering how generally it is received among scientific men, the wise will not meet it in a spirit of opposition, and they will probably feel persuaded that at least it must contain much truth, even if the statement of the doctrine has not yet reached the form in which it will finally be received.

We may distinguish three purposes which scientific authority fulfils. 1. By starting on the study of any science with trust in the soundness of past work, instead of imagining that we have to find out everything for ourselves, we may possess ourselves with comparative ease of the acquisitions of the past. The knowledge thus attained is real knowledge. Our own verification of the grounds on which it rests may ultimately become our chief reason for believing

in its truth; and yet in reaching this position we have been dependent at every step on the guidance of authority. Paths for human thought have been cleared and trodden, along which the mind marches without difficulty, where the first explorers were impeded by the huge trunks of standing or fallen forest trees and tangled brushwood. 2. Again, authority often plays an important part in the advance of a science, by marking out the directions in which research is most needed and is most likely to be rewarded. The young student accepts suggestions from those who have the fullest knowledge of the actual condition of a science, as to the problems which seem capable of, and which most call for, solution; and he is saved from wasting his time and energies on less hopeful tasks. 3. Scientific authority has a right to control the opinion of those who cannot understand, or who have not attempted to examine, the grounds of its assertions. It may also furnish them with principles to be applied in the practice of arts and trades, and these principles may thus receive confirmation, apart from their full, appropriate proof.

It will hardly be disputed that authority, if shown to be legitimate, must in every subject answer these ends. The only question will be as to the claim which the authority has to be trusted. Let us lay

down, then, the points thus far gained. If there is such an authority in religion, it must be admitted that, by the guidance it supplies, it will help the individual mind in coming to know for itself the body of truth for which the authority vouches; and that it may contribute to progress by indicating points which need fuller inquiry; and that it ought to command the respect of those who cannot have immediate knowledge of the subject, and may furnish them with principles for action, the truth of which may be confirmed by trial.

We have yet to consider moral beliefs, and we ask, Is this the whole scope that authority can have in regard to them? Reflection seems to show that it is not, but that here authority does, and may rightly, combine more intimately with the conscience, reason, and study of the individual, in producing conviction.

The moral law speaks to the individual conscience with a strange authority that mere experience does not explain. The pure utilitarian and materialist have tried in vain to account for this as a mere illusion. It remains the judgment, not only of the mass of mankind, but of many of the greatest moral philosophers, that there must be something real corresponding to this awe which is inspired by the idea

of moral obligation. Passion often overpowers it, but it makes itself felt after the gratification of an evil desire. Mysterious sanctions of the law are shadowed forth to the imagination. To coarse natures, they may present themselves as external punishments. In higher ones the feeling may chiefly be that the breach of the law is contrary to the truth of their being, and must introduce disorder and unhappiness. But the point in either case is that the sense of the sacredness of the law and apprehension of the consequences of disregarding it are in excess of anything that can be justified by actual experience. The acknowledgment of this does not involve adhesion to the doctrine that morality is intuitive or instinctive, as that doctrine has often been stated. The point on which I am insisting is distinct from the question what factors revealed religion, and the mind and conscience, and the experience of the individual or of the race, severally are in furnishing the content of the moral law, as it is conceived by different persons and in different ages. We need only to maintain that moral truth, however made known or ascertained, claims an authority for its injunctions, the legitimacy of which cannot be proved by any rigorous scientific method, but which is due to a mysterious correspondence between this kind of truth and man's spiritual nature, while it wit-

nesses to a supernatural order to which he stands related.

There has, in point of fact, been a gradual evolution of moral ideas throughout the history of our race; and on the whole the process has been one of genuine progress, of purification, elevation, and expansion. Conscience has often been spoken of, as if it had of itself a final and absolute perception of right and wrong. It far more closely resembles a judge who has a code to administer, which code is supplied from without, and has differed and differs widely in different ages and places. The individual conscience is first trained by the established standard, and its own moral perceptions are awakened to recognize all that is right in it. At the same time, it is able, within limits, to criticize the law which it receives from without, and is responsible for doing so, and for totally rejecting, or improving, its principles or precepts where they are faulty. Some—but they are few—rise in a marked manner above the moral ideas prevailing around them, and become a chief agency in moral progress. Or, again, such progress may take place through the discipline provided by circumstances for a whole society, or the new and higher ideals set before it, and the enthusiasm created in it. But although the body of morality is thus

extended through well-understood influences and experience, the same mysterious sanctity and authoritativeness attaches to its latest acquisitions, when once they have been secured, as to its most ancient precepts.

The idea and place of authority in connexion with moral beliefs is not, however, only to be found in the aspect which moral principles and precepts wear for the human mind. Authority also assists the individual in the adequate perception and the interpretation of such even as have been longest established. The individual conscience is not even in this respect independent of the consciences of others. The testimony of numbers has here a significance such as we do not find in the case of scientific authority. Most men see at best but dimly in the region of moral truth, and the consentient belief of the many plays an important part in strengthening the hold of the individual mind upon it. Nor can it, I think, be seriously questioned that this is a legitimate element of moral conviction. There are analogies to this in other cases, as in that of the observation of common facts; but it has peculiar importance here, owing to the special weakness of human nature in the moral sphere.

We have found, then, that in addition to the three uses of scientific authority—guidance with a view to the more rapid acquisition by the individual mind

of the stores of knowledge which have been slowly accumulated by others before him—guidance with a view to the advancement of the branch of knowledge itself which may be in question—guidance for those who have not the capacity or the opportunity to master the particular kind of knowledge—there are two other forms in which the principle of authority appears in the sphere of moral knowledge. They are these: (1) a moral principle may give signs of truth, especially through a mysterious correspondence between it and the constitution of our being, by virtue of which our trust and obedience may be justly demanded for it, even where we cannot fully verify its decrees; (2) the consentient testimony of numbers both serves to quicken and to confirm the perceptions of the individual mind, and adds a material element to the grounds of belief.

Our proper task is the investigation of the place
 Principles of of authority in matters of religious belief.
 religious
 authority. There is an obvious similarity between the
 authoritative character of moral truth and the authority
 of the prophet, whose word is accepted by those who
 believe in him in matters beyond their cognizance
 or full perception, on the ground of a confidence
 which he is able to inspire. And again there is
primâ facie an analogy between that authority of

consentient testimony, of which I have just spoken, and the authority claimed for the Church in the perception and interpretation of revelation. It will be found, I believe, that these are no mere superficial resemblances, but that the comparison with the case of moral beliefs which has been suggested, will be of real assistance in enabling us to understand the functions of authority in regard to religious knowledge. And this is what we should expect, if the Christian conviction is true that moral beliefs have their ultimate explanation in the likeness and communion between the human spirit and the Divine. At the same time, distinctive principles enter in the case of knowledge of religious truth, to which we must pay due heed.

The idea of revelation is so important in connexion with our attitude to religious knowledge that it will be well, before going further, to give a brief consideration to this subject, taking first its nature, and then the means for its authentication.

Dr. Martineau in his recent work, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*,¹ has sought to invert the ordinary usage of the terms "revealed" and "natural" religion. He makes "revelation" simply the equivalent

Dr. Martineau's view of revelation and of spiritual authority.

¹ See Book III. ch. ii.

of "intuition." The amount of each man's immediate perceptions of Divine things is revealed religion for him. In natural religion he would include the spiritual truth contained in the Scriptures, along with all such as comes to us through history and the testimony of others, as well as through observation of physical nature. As a question of terminology, and with a view to conveying a clear meaning, this change does not seem to be happy. One can understand, indeed, the purpose with which the word "revealed" is here applied; but there seems to be no suitability in his use of "natural," and we cannot but suspect that he would have discarded the word, had it not been for the historic contrast between it and "revealed." Further, it follows, if his language is adopted, that the same truth which belongs to revealed religion, when I am thinking of it as evidencing itself in my own consciousness, changes into a truth of natural religion, when I contemplate it as evidenced to other minds.

But the question is not merely one of language. The new use of terms proposed by Dr. Martineau is connected with his most fundamental assumptions. He would make the individual mind the measure of truth to itself. The following passage from the preface will state his position fairly.

"I am prepared to hear that, after dispensing with miracles and infallible persons, I have no right to speak of 'authority' at all, the intuitional assurance which I substitute for it being nothing but confidence in my own reason. If to rest on authority is to mean an acceptance of what, as foreign to my faculty, I cannot know, in mere reliance on the testimony of one who can and does, I certainly find no such basis for religion; inasmuch as second-hand belief, assented to at the dictation of an initiated expert, without personal response of thought and reverence in myself, has no more tincture of religion in it than any other lesson learned by rote. The mere resort to testimony for information beyond our province does not fill the meaning of 'authority;' which we never acknowledge till that which speaks to us from another and a higher strikes home and wakes the echoes in ourselves, and is thereby instantly transferred from external attestation to self-evidence. And this response it is which makes the moral intuitions, started by outward appeals, reflected back by inward veneration, more than egoistic phenomena, and turning them into correspondency between the universal and the individual mind, invests them with true 'authority.' We trust in them, not with any rationalist arrogance because they are our own, but precisely because they

are *not* our own, with awe and aspiration. The *consciousness* of authority is doubtless human; but conditional on the *source* being Divine."¹

In the view of authority which he here attacks, he seems to me to have before his mind a mechanical doctrine, with which I do not sympathize. But, on the other hand, he ignores, to say the least, the possibility that men may be disciplined by that which they may have good reason for accepting, though they do not understand it, and seems to imply that there is no manifestation of truth without us fuller than that which can be apprehended by the individual mind, and having a stronger authentication than its own vision can give it. And the real question is whether this is so, or whether there may not be a spiritual recognition of truth, which yet transcends our grasp, an unveiling of God and His Will, which we can truly know to be from Him, though it is made without and not within us,—evidence as to His character which is not contained in, however it may accord with, our intuitions, and which brings us an assurance, and therefore speaks with an authority, which they cannot supply.

Dr. Martineau would not deny that our weak faith may at times be permitted to look through the eyes of some strong soul, and that it may thereby gain

¹ *Seat of Authority*, Pref., p. vi.

a sense of the certainty of spiritual things which, before we had not, and which we lose when we return within ourselves; nor, again, that the whole volume of the spiritual experience of mankind is a fact vastly greater than the spiritual experience of a single individual. He would not, I say, deny this, but throughout his book he fails to take account of the significance which it ought to have for us, even if we do not go beyond the simplest view of it. But I would contend that it leads up to, and prepares us to receive, the conception both of the prophetic office, and generally of the revelation contained in the Old Testament, and of the culmination of God's manifestation of Himself in the Incarnation, and also that of the authority of the Church.

The idea of revelation, as held by the great body of Christian believers, implies the communi-
 cation of truth which man cannot infer The nature of revelation.
 from his moral experience, or attain to by the normal use of his intellectual powers. It is light falling here and there through rifts in the succession of material phenomena from behind and beyond them. But there are various degrees in which such knowledge may transcend ordinary knowledge,—a greater or less unusualness in the illumination.

As we have already had occasion to observe, moral

truth in its higher aspects cannot be derived from common observation, or be proved by the logical understanding; nor can a moral order or Divine purpose in the course of the world. Such truths have their evidence for the heart and mind of man; but it is evidence which appeals to men of the same general intellectual calibre with very different degrees of force. The apprehension of these truths does not come completely under those laws of uniformity which are implied in the term "natural."¹ According to Christian doctrine, this spiritual knowledge, though found even among the heathen, proceeds from the Eternal Word, the Revealer. And it is important not to lose sight of the points of similarity and connexion between all God's manifestations of Himself to man.

Yet communications of truth concerning God, and man as he is in God's sight, and God's purposes respecting him, of a more special and exceptional kind are (as we have said) commonly meant under the term "revelation." And revelation, in this distinctive sense, is from this point of view contrasted with more ordinary spiritual illumination as the one supernatural, the other natural. It is not to be

¹ See definition of "natural" in Bishop Butler's *Analogy*, Part I. ch. i., concluding paragraphs.

supposed that in the exceptionalness itself there is anything Divine ; but, as has been already indicated, the idea of revelation presupposes the communication of knowledge not attainable by more ordinary means. Such revelation may be given through the teaching of accredited Divine messengers,—in the highest example through “the Word made flesh,”—or it may shine from some fact full of deep moral significance. The death of Jesus, if He was the Christ of God, and His resurrection, were such facts. But so, also, the teaching given, and its authentication, in whatever this may have consisted—the appearance of the teacher taken in conjunction with the signs of purpose which there may be in its having been appointed to occur at such a time and place—may, as a whole, be a fact which throws light upon, or gives assurance of, the character or purposes of God, in a way that the ordinary signs of Providence in the government of the world and constitution of man do not.

It is further to be observed that manifestations of spiritual life, which, taken separately, are not different or at most do not differ in kind, from such as are to be observed elsewhere, may yet in combination, by their mass and volume among a particular people or society or at a particular time, or from the manner in which they contribute to the progressive education

of man in Divine things, constitute a unique fact, or one in the highest degree exceptional, and may thus form a revelation in the distinctive sense. This, to a great degree, is the character of the revelation contained in the Old Testament.

Again, the contents of the revelation, the truths communicated, need not be otherwise entirely unknown and unsuspected. Indeed, if, as is undoubtedly the case, the fitness of the revelation to the moral nature and condition of man be an indispensable element among the reasons for receiving it, there can hardly fail to be indications of the truths which it conveys in man's constitution and surroundings, such as might lead to their partial surmise. The very same considerations which serve for the confirmation of the truths delivered, and so of the authenticity of the revelation, might go some way towards its ascertainment.

Hence some who would maintain that there is nothing in Christianity which man's faculties, when at their best, would have been unable to discover, would yet concede to it the glory of having imparted truth which could in no other way have been received at the time when it appeared, and which cannot now be otherwise brought home to the majority of mankind. This is the view presented in the lines of "In Memoriam":—

“Though truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessings to the name
Of Him who made them current coin.”

Among the truths taught by Christ and His apostles, as also by the Old Testament prophets, there are some, no doubt, which answer to this description. But this is a very inadequate account of the scriptural revelation as a whole, if its own claims be accepted. The history of redemption, if true, supplies facts not to be observed by human experience in the common course either of Nature or of the Providence which is to be traced in human history and individual lives. And these facts embody truths which might conceivably have been *imagined*, though that is most improbable, but which could not possibly have been *established as truths* by the mere native force of the intuitive faculty of man. These facts, once known, give a new view of God and of human destiny.

If, then, we assume the substantial truth of Holy Scripture, there seems justification for the contrast between natural and revealed religion, as it is ordinarily understood by Christians. Natural religion is that religion which has its ground in the common sources of knowledge just referred to. Between the spiritual phenomena thus presented to us, and some

of those with which we meet in Holy Scripture, there are many analogies and correspondences. Nevertheless, God is made known in the history of Israel, the teaching of her race of prophets and the devotions of her psalmists, in the writings of the apostles, and, above all, in the person and work of Jesus Christ Himself and the great facts connected with Him, in a manner which so transcends in fulness and clearness any manifestation of Him which is to be found elsewhere; light is here thrown on so many points of the greatest importance to us, which must otherwise remain utterly dark; the series and order of facts and development of truth in the two "dispensations" form such a unique whole; that we may justly reserve the name, "revealed religion," for the system of faith and practice thus delivered to us. The notion of marking off an area within which there was a special communication of Divine truth is no doubt repugnant to some minds. But there is nothing *à priori* incredible in the supposition, for particular races or periods have in other respects had a mission to accomplish unique in the history of the world.

But in what way can a revelation have been, or be, authenticated? First, an authentication of revelation. tion more or less complete may be given by the evidence of fulfilled predictions and of miracles.

This may be termed external evidence, in contrast with the internal evidence afforded by the character of the revelation and of those who are its mouth-pieces.

In the Book of Deuteronomy the fulfilment of a prophet's predictions is given as a test by which his claims may be tried. And there can be no question that, from the time of the first disciples of Christ, the fulfilment of prophecy in Him was urged as a reason for believing in Him and His doctrine. It is to be noted, however, that many of the Hebrew prophets did not utter predictions capable of being verified in their own time, and that nevertheless they claimed to be believed by the men of their time, as speaking in the name of God.

Prophecy itself is of the nature of the miraculous ; but miracles, too, more commonly so called, were the signs of a Divine commission. Yet many of the older prophets were without this commendation also.

It is clear, then, that in many cases the evidence of the prophet's claims was of an internal, or moral kind ; that is to say, it lay in the character of his message which found a response in the consciences of his hearers, and in the impression which his character, his tone and manner of life, produced, the confidence thus inspired in his sincerity and freedom from self-deception. Moreover, it is everywhere assumed that

tests of this moral kind must be applied. The book already referred to taught that against a failure to satisfy these, even palpable miracles could not avail.¹ And our Lord, in the most emphatic manner, makes the desire of conformity to the Divine will the means of recognizing the divinity of His doctrine. "My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself."²

It is conceivable, perhaps, that external authentication of a revelation might be given so overwhelming as to compel belief in it, independently of all other grounds; but such has not actually been the course taken in God's dealings with men. The various portions, however, of the evidence by which a revelation is authenticated, may appeal very differently to different ages, according to their position with regard to it. Distance of time in itself introduces a new element, owing to the difficulty there may be in proving the reality of accompanying signs, and the historical investigation and criticism which will in any case be necessary. On the other hand, the moral evidence may gain not only in its importance relatively to other kinds and in the impression which

¹ Deut. xiii. 1-3; xviii. 20.

² John vii. 16, 17.

it makes upon the mind owing to new habits of thought, but in actual weight. For with time the doctrine is more and more tried by experience, and comes to be more fully understood. And we may not only judge of the characters of the teachers, as their contemporaries did, but we may be spectators of the ever-growing marvel that while generation is gathered to generation they still retain their place in the veneration and love and trust of mankind.

The need of external evidences—by which, in this place, historical evidences are specially meant—can never be removed by increased attention to moral evidences. For, as we have said, the revelation has been largely made through alleged facts. If they are not facts, there has been, so far, no revelation. In other words, the Christian faith, as has been often said, is a historical faith. From the circumstance, however, that the series of facts in question is of a unique character, and that a large element of the supernatural is included, which is unsupported by ordinary human experience, as to the laws governing phenomena, historical evidence of a strength which would otherwise be abundantly sufficient to establish the general truth of the facts may well fail to carry conviction. It is here that the internal character of the revelation enters into, and may be

justly allowed to exert a marked influence upon, the total estimate of the evidence. The antecedent improbability that must always lie against the miraculous as such, may be removed when its relation to the revelation with which it is connected, and the purpose and character of that revelation, have been duly taken into account. And thus a true comprehension and sympathetic appreciation of the significance of the revelation will rightly determine belief.

In earlier ages it was necessary that men should apply moral tests to a doctrine supported by signs, because of the number of workers of signs, false as well as true, and the readiness with which men believed in them. To us moral tests are necessary for the opposite reason that we find signs difficult to believe. And we may be thankful that, owing to the circumstance that this difficulty is more widely felt in our own generation than it has ever been, we are driven to a fuller reflection upon, and setting forth of, that other kind of evidence; for we are thus led to a truer knowledge of the faith itself.

In applying the term moral evidence to describe all other evidence than that which has been termed external, we use it in a large sense. It may become more apparent presently what kind of it is specially important, and also what kind and degree of moral

evidence can be expected in the case of a Divine revelation. But in assigning to evidence that can be called moral the place which we have done, we necessarily raise the question to what extent the moral faculties of man can judge of the attributes of God and of His declared will. It has been argued not infrequently that in presuming to do this, they go beyond their province. Apart from the general interest of this question, it is evident that it is intimately connected with our main subject. For we have here a startling assertion of the authority of revelation over man's reason. And it is important that we should inquire whether it is legitimate or not, or, if not, how it differs from others which are so.

The position in question has often been taken up by Christian apologists, when some doctrine which they have believed to be an integral portion of revelation has been attacked on the ground that it conflicts with our moral sense. This has, however, in general been done only in a popular manner. One attempt to state it with precision and to provide it with a philosophic basis necessarily comes to mind, that of the late Dean Mansel, in his *Limits of Religious Thought*. Some apology may be necessary for reviving a controversy which may seem now to be obsolete. I cannot avoid doing so, because I believe that in it

more than at any other time, a particular question which cannot be here passed over, was brought to a clear issue. If the argument of these famous Bampton Lectures was, from the point of view of Christian apology and sound Christian theology, a gigantic blunder, as I myself strongly feel, it had at least the merit of being one of those mistakes which by their thoroughness bring to light a fallacy that commonly remains latent.

It will not be necessary here to examine his philosophy in general. On the application which he makes of it to our moral ideas, it may suffice to say (1) that his argument to show that we are involved in inevitable contradictions when we extend these ideas to the Divine Being, seems to reduce itself to verbal quibbling. When he tells us, for example, that infinite goodness is inconceivable, in the sense of being a self-contradictory idea, he himself creates the difficulty by putting an unsuitable meaning upon the word "infinite," or by using it when he should have used some other. If by "infinite" is meant "infinitely extended," then it is as unfitting to apply it to a moral attribute as it would be to suppose Time to have two or three dimensions. Or, again, if to speak of a thing as "infinite" implies that it is everything else as well as itself, that is not so much to have

discovered a contradiction, as a complete intellectual blank. For the word "infinite," substitute the better word "perfect," and there is no such difficulty as is alleged. We cannot form an *adequate* conception of perfect goodness, but the expression leads us into no contradictions. It is not in this sense inconceivable to us, that it is present entire throughout the thought and action of the Divine Being. (2) There seems to be a reason in the constitution of our minds for attributing an absoluteness to our moral ideas which does not belong to our ideas in general. We cannot think away the conditions of space and time, but we feel no repugnance to supposing that there may be beings who are not subject to them. So of our other laws of thought, with the single exception of the principles of morality. It is intolerable to us to think that these can really differ for any rational beings. And the highest conception which we can any of us form of God is felt to be that these principles, which in us are derived, and are never fully allowed their rightful place, in Him have their source, and are the very expression of His nature. We are compelled to accept the guidance of our mental images of things even where there is most reason to think that they are conditioned by our human forms of thought. There is still better ground for

trusting our ideas where they bear distinct marks of a true universality. The believer in God must at least find it hard to suppose that He who made us could have designed that in such a case we should be misled.¹

To be just to Dean Mansel, after he has endeavoured to destroy our confidence in our moral faculties as a means of judging of God's character, or of a revelation professing to come from Him, he tries again in a measure to restore it. They have a *regulative*, not a *speculative* value; they are meant for our practical guidance here below. He even concedes that our conceptions of the moral attributes "dimly indicate some corresponding reality in the Divine nature."² And he allows a place to considerations drawn from the internal character of a revelation among its evidences; though he holds that the importance of these has been greatly exaggerated in modern times.³ With reference to the sphere of the former, he makes the

¹ It is strange to find a Christian writer exclaiming against Kant's "inconsistency" in respect to moral ideas (Mansel, Lecture VII. p. 201). The fact is, Kant was a really great thinker, and knew where the applicability of the reasoning he had employed in other cases stopped, and was not carried away by love even of the system most peculiarly identified with himself.

² *Ibid.*, p. 261. He is speaking of God's love as well as of language in Holy Scripture about His anger.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 236, ff.

following distinctions. "The legitimate object," he tells us, "of a rational criticism of revealed religion, is not to be found in the *contents* of that religion, but in its *evidences*." In a certain sense, he allows, the contents are included in the evidences of a revelation. But in this connexion they are judged by their "adaptation to the actual circumstances and wants of man." Again, they are, when used for this purpose, regarded "as furnishing only one probable presumption out of many;—a presumption which may confirm and be confirmed by coinciding testimony from other sources, or, on the contrary, may be outweighed, when we come to balance probabilities, by conflicting evidence on the other side."¹

The object of these distinctions is clear enough, especially if his general argument is borne in mind. It is to be observed, however, that if the moral sense is discredited, the effect of this cannot be confined to those cases in which its verdict seems to tell against a supposed revelation, if such there are. If it is to be set aside as untrustworthy in these, it cannot be relied upon in others, where it is favourable to revelation. Its *regulative* value must also be generally impaired, as well as its *speculative*, by any instance in which it has to be deliberately ignored.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 235.

Even though we should feel justified in striking the balance on the side on which the bulk of its testimony lies, an element of uncertainty has been introduced into our view of the operation of the judging faculties, which must render the result precarious.

There is, however, this measure of truth in the practical aim which the writer whom we have been criticizing, and others who have adopted the same position without trying to support it by a philosophic argument, had in view; namely, that while it behoves us at all times to be conscious of our own ignorance and the weakness of our powers, this is especially incumbent upon us in judging of that which there is any reason to believe to be a revelation from God. And there is this further excuse for them that, in their assertions that man's morality is not a measure for the morality of God, they have often had before their minds judgments that have been essentially arrogant, and hastily or more or less irreverently expressed. To every word that Bishop Butler says concerning the difficulties there may be in a revelation, and concerning Christianity as a scheme imperfectly comprehended, we may entirely assent; and it is most important that we should lay to heart the practical conclusions which he draws. But it is one thing to remember that we may have misunderstood

the purport of a doctrine which repels us, or that if we could see the whole of a course of action of which we know but a part, that which seems harsh and meaningless in it would be found not to be so. It is quite another to suppose that righteousness and love differ in God and in man, and to be required to accept propositions as truths which assume such a difference.¹

What loss to faith itself there would be if we did not use our moral judgments upon teaching offered for our acceptance as Divine truth appears in a signal manner from a consideration of two of the chief instances to which Dean Mansel applies his principle, the doctrines of the atonement and of everlasting punishment.²

It is for these doctrines, or rather for certain forms of them, that such a defence has most often been employed. There has, however, been a great change even in the thirty years since Dean Mansel wrote in the views of these doctrines held among thoughtful Christians, and not least among those who seek most earnestly to know the mind of Scripture, and who feel most strongly the influence of the desire to keep in harmony with the mass of Christian

¹ See Note B, "Dean Mansel and Bishop Butler."

² *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 210-216, 220-226.

believers. That which was repulsive to the moral sense in the doctrine of the atonement, as commonly taught in recent times, was the theory that the sufferings of Christ were accepted, by a kind of legal fiction, instead of the pain due from the guilty on account of their transgressions. The earnest weighing by believing minds of the moral objections to such a view has led to the conviction that this theory was no part of the real teaching of Scripture; and thus a purer and more scriptural conception of the doctrine has resulted from a criticism proceeding on moral grounds. Again the doctrine of eternal punishment is commonly held and set forth now by those who feel most the importance of orthodoxy, in a very different way from that in which it used to be only a few years ago. Every consideration is wont to be introduced which can limit the number of the finally lost, and mitigate the image of the horror of their condition. What is still more in point for our present purpose, the thought is anxiously insisted on that God only condemns those to eternal punishment whom He could not possibly save without the greater mischief of interference with man's exercise of freedom in the ultimate decisions of his will.¹ Such a contention is plainly founded on the

¹ See generally, Dr. Pusey, on *What is of faith concerning Everlasting Punishment?*

assumption that God's ways are capable of being justified on human principles of morality.

To those who have realized that the great end of the Christian revelation, and of the redemption set forth therein, is, according to its own teaching concerning itself, to make men morally like God, holy as He is holy, loving as He is loving, and that men are called to know God, which they can only do in so far as they are like Him, the preceding discussion may well have seemed superfluous. Nevertheless it is necessary that we should make sure from general considerations of reason of the validity of our faculty of moral judgment, as applied to revelation, when we are engaged in considering the right use of authority. The exercise of our moral judgment undoubtedly sets limits to the principle of authority, but it does not take it away.

The idea of authority is involved in the very conception of revealed truth. It is knowledge ^{The authority of revealed} coming to us from a source beyond our truth.
reach, and given when God pleases and as He pleases. It is impossible that it should receive complete verification; and yet we may be justified in believing it, if it satisfies those tests which can be applied to it. We accept that which transcends our experience and reasoning on the strength of that which comes within

their sphere. We have seen that moral truth gives an impression of absoluteness and universality, and thus speaks with an authority which experience does not fully warrant. The authority with which revelation presents itself to man is of the same kind.

This kind of authority, this spell which truth exerts over the human mind and heart and conscience, by reason of a certain fitness to them and to man's life, which it possesses, is the form under which we first meet with the idea of authority in Christendom. This, doubtless, was part of what was meant when it was said of Christ Himself that "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes."¹ And in the remarkably full idea of "truth" which we meet with in the New Testament, this prerogative of truth is plainly included.² So, also, in the earliest accounts of the experiences and reflections through which educated heathen were led to embrace the Christian faith, the same thought meets us. Justin Martyr relates how he went from one philosopher to another, and dwells on the remarks of the venerable teacher whom he met on the sea-shore to the effect that, if men had known what philosophy really is, there would not have been a multitude of sects since "this

¹ Matt. vii. 29.

² *E.g.* John xviii. 37; 2 Cor. iv. 2.

science is one," and that this "many-headedness" of philosophy is due to men's having suffered themselves to be led by the authority of mere names.¹ Again, Clement, in the account of his early mental history attributed to him in the Clementine Homilies, speaks of the painful uncertainty on the most momentous questions in which the debates of the philosophic schools left him.² The work is a religious romance; but this makes such a description only the more important as a picture of an experience which cannot have been uncommon. In both cases we have a contrast implied between the various and ill-founded teaching of the philosophers and the unity, the certainty, the authority of Christian truth.

Now here we are brought face to face with the fact that the Christian faith evidences ^{The Christian} itself in this manner to some minds, but ^{consciousness.} not to others. And, painful as it is to do so, we are compelled to trace back this difference to a certain difference of moral state. In saying this we must not be understood to assert an actual moral superiority on the part of all genuine believers in Christianity. We hold, indeed, that the Christian faith has a unique power to change the vicious and restore the fallen, while it brings to the most virtuous who

¹ Justin M., Dial. 2.

² Clem. Hom. I., § 3.

receives it a potentiality of further growth in moral excellence, and its tendency is ever to produce a depth and refinement and completeness of character which are all its own. But individual Christians, who are even thoroughly sincere and earnest, may, and as a matter of fact do, fall far below individual unbelievers in moral attainment. The essential point of difference is that there is a certain view of human nature, marked especially by the sense of sin and of moral infirmity, and its necessary counterpart, aspiration after holiness, and there are certain convictions as to the things worth living for and dying for, which are bound up with the recognition of the truth of the Christian revelation. In part they are awakened by the knowledge of this revelation, in part they dispose the heart and mind to find in it the explanation of human life and destiny.

This attitude and temper of the thinking and responsible being may be described as the Christian consciousness. This consciousness is to be thought of alike as a pervading spirit, and as the characteristic of individual minds, the result of their own living experience. Working in bodies of men, it moulded in course of time a system of thought and a discipline of life, or perhaps we should rather say, systems of thought and disciplines, which were more

or less modified by the action of many causes, while possessing the most essential features in common.

Now, the individual who shares this spirit is rightly influenced by the judgments of the whole body which is actuated by it. In various departments of life we see groups of men divided similarly in their judgments of, and the sides they take with regard to, a whole class of subjects. Owing to similar mental characteristics, or education and experience, they approach a set of questions from the same point of view and with the same premises, and should naturally, therefore, come to the same conclusions. And where they have not satisfactory means of forming a judgment themselves, they will reasonably allow themselves to be guided by those with whom they agree on allied points; for they know that they have the same principles, which they are in the habit of applying in the same way, where they have the opportunity of doing so. They are confirmed also in their hold of their fundamental principles by the sympathy of others. The rational justification of government by political parties, which have a continuous existence through long periods, and adopt a common course of action towards a large number of questions, so far as it is capable of justification, is of this nature. But in the politics of party

views are often bound together which have no real connexion.

An instance which may perhaps place the nature of the authority of a common judgment in a still clearer light is supplied by natural theology, in the well-known argument for a belief in God "from the general consent of mankind."

Illustration
from the
argument for
existence of
God, *e con-
sensu gentium*.

Mr. J. S. Mill, in his discussion of the argument, in his *Essay on Theism*, has failed (as it seems to me) to perceive wherein its cogency lies. How far the statements of the argument which he had met with may have been to blame for his misapprehension of it, we need not stop to inquire. But the manner in which he has treated it, raises the question in a very convenient form for our present purpose.¹

"Before proceeding," he says, "to the argument from marks of design, which, as it seems to me, must always be the main strength of natural theism, we may dispose briefly of some other arguments which are of little scientific weight, but which have greater influence on the human mind than much better arguments, because they are appeals to authority, and it is by authority that the opinions of the bulk of mankind are principally and not unnaturally governed.

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 154.

The authority invoked is that of mankind generally, and specially of some of its wisest men. . . .

“It may doubtless be good advice to persons who, in point of knowledge and cultivation, are not entitled to think themselves competent judges of difficult questions, to bid them content themselves with holding that true which mankind generally believe, and so long as they believe it; or that which has been believed by those who pass for the most eminent among the minds of the past. But to a thinker, the argument, from other people’s opinions, has little weight. It is but second-hand evidence; and merely admonishes us to look out for and weigh the reasons on which this conviction of mankind or of wise men was founded. Accordingly, those who make any claim to philosophic treatment of the subject, employ this general consent chiefly as evidence that there is in the mind of man an intuitive perception, or an instinctive sense, of Deity. From the generality of the belief, they infer that it is inherent in our constitution; from which they draw the conclusion, a precarious one indeed, but conformable to the general mode of proceeding of the intuitive philosophy, that the belief must be true; though, as applied to theism, this argument begs the question, since it has itself nothing to rest upon but the belief that the

human mind was made by a God who would not deceive His creatures."

From this point his discussion of the "argument from consent" resolves itself into a criticism of the supposition, or inference, that the belief in Deity is innate. He urges that the evidence from design, real or apparent, which theists at least regard as weighty, is sufficient to account for the belief. And "if there are external evidences of theism, even if not perfectly conclusive, why need we suppose that the belief of its truth was the result of anything else?" If it be alleged that this belief is found among the ignorant portion of civilized populations, who are incapable of reasoning, and among barbarous tribes, he would reply that the former take their opinions from the educated; and that as for the religious belief of the latter, it is "not belief in the God of natural theology, but a mere modification of the crude generalization which ascribes life, consciousness, and will to all natural powers of which they cannot perceive the source or control the operation." Moreover, the belief in God is not common to all men, and there is a manifest difficulty inherent in the hypothesis of an instinct not universal.

On this exposition, which has here been summarized, our first remark must be that the question whether

there is any innate or instinctive element or not, and if there is, what it is, and how much it amounts to, must, both in the case of religious and moral and other ideas, be one very hard to decide; but that the value of the argument for the existence of God based on the general consent of mankind is not bound up with the theory that belief in Deity is instinctive. Faith in spiritual truth (including to a considerable degree our reasons for believing in truths ordinarily classed as moral) is the result of evidence and inference; though the evidence may not solely be external, like those marks of design in Nature, to which Mr. Mill appears to confine his view; and its processes of inference may not only be those for which an educated mind is required, besides which no others appear to occur to him. The most significant part of the evidence for the existence of God, apart from revelation, consists in the indications that man belongs to a spiritual order, and is responsible to some higher power,—the prickings of remorse, the sense of shame and sin, with which he is visited, and the signs of moral purpose in the world around him, in the laws of his own being and in many events which affect his own life. From observed facts, especially of this moral kind, the mind forms an inference; and yet the process is in great part so

unconscious that the resulting belief may wear the appearance of an intuition till we make an effort to analyze it. Just so in the closely parallel case where we form an opinion of a man's character from a number of particulars, slight words and acts, passing expressions of others about him, hardly noted at the time, we may and sometimes do suppose ourselves to have arrived at our judgment by a single act of discernment.

There may, however, be, and in fact are, many reasons for doubting the trustworthiness both of our particular individual impressions and of the hidden process of reasoning founded on them. It is here that we derive valuable confirmation from the agreement of other minds with our own. We may thus, in the first place, be assured that there is something outside of ourselves corresponding to our spiritual perceptions; and we may give the lie to the suggestion that the supernatural fear of the consequences of wrong-doing arises from a disordered and morbid brain. We constantly rely on the authority of others in a similar way in common affairs. We fancy that we have seen some object; but if all the conditions for sight have not been completely favourable, we know that we may be mistaken. In such a case, our mere impression may be raised to a feeling of certainty, or we may

be induced to set it aside altogether, according as it is confirmed or not, or according to the degree in which it is confirmed, by the testimony of others. We have heard words spoken in conversation, and yet we may not be satisfied that we apprehended their purport, or even heard them, rightly, till we have questioned others how they understood and remember them. And so, also, as to inferences from what has been observed. Our conviction as to their validity, especially where the process has not been, and cannot be, made logically rigorous, is most justly strengthened by the knowledge that other minds, after going through a process in general the same, and perhaps with other evidence before them, have reached the same result. The illustration of judgments on character which I took just now is in point here also. We compare our own opinion, formed by the sum of our impressions, with that of others, and confirm and correct it thereby.

This view of the argument for belief in the existence of God from general consent is not open to the objections which Mr. Mill alleges, or not to the same extent as the view which he attacks. The convictions of the simple-minded and unlettered may contribute to its force as truly as those of minds capable of weighing evidence scientifically. If their moral and spiritual

life is higher and fuller, they have still more right to be heard. Even superstitious and degraded forms of religious belief and observance, though necessarily they count for less than the higher ones, are an evidence of perceptions, however dim and distorted, of spiritual things, and add weight *pro tanto*. Even the total absence of the belief is not so difficult to account for as it would be if regarded as instinctive. For it is easier to suppose that the primary intuitions out of which the belief is constructed should in particular instances have been very faint, and from various circumstances not attended to, or that prejudice should have prevented them from having their due effect upon the mind, and that the influence of the authority of prevailing belief should have been rendered nugatory, than that a belief supposed to be innate in man should have been wanting in particular individuals and classes of the genus, or should have been uprooted before the beginning of conscious life.

Moreover, the authority, the claims of which I have contended are rightful, is not one good for the ignorant only among mankind. The most enlightened will give it weight, and stand in need of its help. It does not "merely admonish us to look out for and weigh the reasons on which this conviction of mankind or of wise men was founded." It makes a material addition

of its own to the grounds for believing. And probably nothing but the strong back swing of the pendulum among Protestant nations, which is not yet ended, after the exaggerated claims of authority in the Middle Ages, can account for its true place not having been perceived in such an instance as that just given, by acute minds like those of Mr. Mill and others.¹ This argument does not, indeed, appear to the present writer any more than other arguments for belief in God, apart from revelation, sufficient of itself to do more than raise a presumption in favour of the belief. Nor do all such arguments together effect more than this. But the reason of this is not to be found in the weakness of the principle of authority as such, but partly in the want of completeness of the consent; partly, in the difficulties as regards the order of nature and the moral government of the world, which render belief in God on any grounds so hard, if there has not been such a clear manifestation of loving will, as the Christian faith recognizes.

In the case of the belief in truths of revealed religion there is a special element. The common judgment which in part confirms that of individuals, in part determines theirs, and is followed by them where they cannot see for

The principle applied to the reception of revealed religion.

¹ See Note C, "Professor Flint on the argument *e consensu gentium*."

themselves, is that of a body of persons united by strong ties of sympathy, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by certain well-defined principles which they share. For all that is most essential in the Christian faith we have means of verification which are altogether unique among all cases of the kind which we are considering, supplied by the common consent of an innumerable multitude of every race, of every variety of natural character and social and intellectual grade, among countless generations of mankind who have lived under the most divers general conditions of life and thought. The power of the revelation is verified, its purport and the relation between its essence and its form are illustrated, in the life of moral and spiritual experience. Through faculties quickened by such experience, its correspondence with the constitution of our own being and with the indications of Divine providence in the course of the world is recognized. Here, however, are matters in which the consentient experience and judgment of many must count for infinitely more than the experience and judgment of one, even if that one be myself. However profound might be my own impression of the truth of the faith, I might naturally hesitate to believe it if I stood alone. But I am sustained by the common faith of Christian believers,

who have manifested its fruits in their lives. My own faith is, it may be, but feeble; I am but a beginner in the ways of God. But such immediate knowledge of Divine things as I have fits in with what others plainly declare. In hours of darkness and distress, and when surrounded with able and upright men who do not believe, and confronted with serious intellectual difficulties with which faith may seem to be beset, I can lean on this support, and I am sure that I behave rationally in so doing. If I rejected it I should be guilty of "dealing treacherously with the generation of God's children."¹ Whatever is most admirable in humanity, whatever most commends itself to my conscience and commands my sympathy and affections, I see in them. And I know that at times, and even on the whole, I have at least dimly perceived the truths which they see so clearly.

The feeling of dislike to anything which savours of "the mere authority of numbers" is not unnatural. It arises from the fact that so often in the history of the world the few have been in the right against the many. Nevertheless, it seems clear that consentient testimony does discharge that function which I have assigned to it. Moreover, it ought not to be an objection to a belief that many hold it. Truth should

¹ Psalm lxxiii. 15.

commend itself as truth to all minds which are properly placed for contemplating it. The employment, to a greater or less extent, of such guidance in shaping our convictions and our courses of action is inevitable. We can only endeavour to counteract such errors and mischiefs as may arise by any correctives which are available in each case.

What has been thus far said must suffice for a discussion of general principles. We can now pass to the consideration of the two chief examples of widely acknowledged authority in matters of religious belief—that of the Bible and that of the Church. But in what order ought these to be taken? The endeavour to decide this point at once raises difficult questions as to the logical relation between the two. On the one hand, the difficulty, or impossibility, of the task set to the individual, if he is by himself alone to attain to a well-grounded conviction of the authority of the Bible, must be evident to every candid inquirer. And the canon of Scripture has, as matter of history, been settled by the Church. But, on the other hand, how can the authority of the Church herself be proved without belief in Holy Scripture? Her very existence is bound up with that revelation which the Bible contains; and special words of the Lord are her

charter, and furnish the grounds on which infallible truth is claimed for her decisions, when legitimately made.¹

It appears to me that those who press to extremes the doctrine that the individual is dependent upon the teaching of the Church for what he believes, cannot escape from the vicious circle thus suggested.² But our reasoning will not be open to this objection if it is capable of being reduced to the following form. It may be possible without any theory of the Church, and, so far as we need the aid of authority, by reliance only on that of the general Christian consciousness, to attain to a belief in the substantial truth of the great outlines of the Christian revelation. And these may involve the general design of Christ to establish a kingdom with sufficient clearness to enable us to form a conception of the Church and of her attributes. And then, by the help of her teaching, it may be possible to complete our theory of Holy Scripture, or, if not to complete it, to carry it further in the direction of precision and completeness.

It is not necessary that in practice the parts of two lines of reasoning, which are thus mutually related,

¹ See below, p. 106.

² See Note D, Bishop Forbes and Mr. W. Palmer on "The Church and the Bible."

should be carefully adjusted. They may be pursued in a measure separately, provided that they are at least in a measure independent, and that it is remembered that they would need to be in some such way intertwined, in order to their full respective justification. In the present instance, if we desire to approximate to logical form, the argument which concerns the records of revelation has to be first pursued. But when it has been advanced a stage, further progress becomes impossible or difficult, till, with the knowledge which has been gained, we have brought the other forward. And then we can again return to that first taken up. And something of this kind took place in actual history. When the Church in the second century was beginning to define her belief in regard to the New Testament writings and the most fundamental articles of her creed, she had as yet no clear view of her function as an authoritative teacher of truth. In the very process of dealing with the questions brought before her, she arrived at a consciousness of it, and improved the organ for its expression, and thus became fitted for still more delicate tasks of the same kind.

It appears, then, to be right to discuss first the grounds of the authority of the Bible. And there

is the further advantage in this order, that we thus place in the forefront the question which to most Englishmen will seem the more fundamental of the two. So far as the idea of the Church affects the issue, we can turn back in the subsequent chapter to complete the consideration of the subject.

CHAPTER III.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

THE general idea of Divine revelation and of its authority has been considered in the last chapter. The question remains whether the Bible is, or contains, such a revelation. A discussion, however, of this question, that could in any sense be considered adequate, must involve many intricate investigations, both in regard to the internal characteristics of the Bible, and of historical evidence bearing upon facts which it records, and the date and authorship of the books of which it is composed. Inquiries of this nature would carry us far beyond the scope of the present essay, the main object of which is to be an examination of method. I desire simply to get the question as to the Divine authority of the Bible into shape; to distinguish between different views that have been taken of it; to consider what kinds of proof are applicable to the subject, and how much may conceivably be proved; and to assign their respective

parts to moral and historical evidence, to individual judgment, and to the authority of commonly accepted Christian beliefs.

At the outset we must draw attention to a distinction, the importance of which has been Revelation and inspiration. felt by most persons who have thought carefully in this generation on the claims of the Bible. It is that between revelation and inspiration, with the corresponding questions:—Does the Bible *contain* a true revelation? Is the book itself to be regarded as inspired, and, if so, what is the nature of its inspiration? Till recently the two were almost completely identified, not only popularly, but even by able writers, so that revelation became as it were another name for the Bible. By fixing our thoughts at times on the revelation itself which has been made, as distinguished from the records of it, we are, in the first place, more likely to do justice to the general scheme of revelation; we are able to trace the purpose running through it; its chief truths stand out, and the relations of its various parts are perceived; it is shaped in our minds into a doctrine of which we understand the significance, and can give to ourselves a rational account. Further, faith in this revelation must logically precede any theory of the inspiration of the Bible. For the former we need, besides a spiritual appreciation of the

significance of the revelation, only a conviction that the records are substantially trustworthy. Indeed, if we are able to rely on a portion of the documents, we shall have sufficient evidence for the main facts. Many believing minds, intelligently holding the great articles of the Christian faith, have been, and are, content to remain in suspense as to many questions affecting the authenticity and accuracy of books of the Bible, while they await the light to be thrown by fuller investigations.

The position just described is important as a halting-place; but it will hardly be possible in the long run for those who believe in the revelation to abstain from some theory about the book which is so remarkably connected with its delivery. Does the revelation contained fill up, so to speak, the containing vessel? Or does the containing vessel enclose much else besides? Is the revelation presented to us in that book with a certain completeness, the supreme manifestation of God in Christ being long prepared for by varied spiritual experience and discipline, and its various aspects being harmoniously set forth through the manifold utterances of many evangelists and apostles? Is the collection of books which make up the Bible, proceeding though they do from very different minds in widely distant ages, characterized

by a singular unity? Are they pervaded by one spirit, and do they contribute to a common end? Is the Bible, taken as a whole, marked by a unique spiritual power? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, we have already a doctrine of the inspiration of the bible and of its authority; for the presence of a special Divine influence is thus acknowledged, which has not only quickened but also directed and controlled the minds of the writers, and guided the selection of the books. Yet there will be important differences in the doctrine, and in the resulting view of Biblical authority, according as the answers are given with more or less considerable qualifications, or given absolutely and with the implication that there is no room for error of any kind in the Bible, or none for error in certain respects.

An answer, partial indeed, but yet of great practical value, to some of the chief of these questions—a conviction of the substantial truth, and general unity of purpose, and unparalleled spiritual power of Holy Scripture—can be obtained even by those who have no special aptitude or equipment or leisure for theological and historical studies. Moral and spiritual perceptions, which only need exercise in order to be rendered efficient, together with a perfectly sound and legitimate reliance upon the common judgment

of Christians, suffice for this. And even those who can devote themselves most entirely to the inquiries on which a more exact solution depends, cannot hope, in this generation, to do more than to aid in a general advance towards its accomplishment. Different minds, even among those who approach the subject with the presuppositions and the temper of mind necessary for religious faith, will, from the nature of the case, form varying estimates as to the amount that may be safely asserted in regard to those characteristics of Holy Scripture which I have indicated. But their agreement is far more vital and important than are their differences. So, also, the extent varies to which such a belief regarding Holy Scripture springs in different minds from immediate, individual intuition, or is received from an authority more or less vague or precise. But it must, I think, be acknowledged on reflection that the individual believer whose conviction seems and is most independent, would not in reality have been able to attain to it independently. The labour and thought of many, and the action of a common spiritual consciousness in the past and in the present, have certainly in this matter proved to be a necessary condition of knowledge and faith.

In Christian countries, children receive the Bible

from the hands of parents and teachers as an inspired, and most often as an absolutely infallible, volume. Or if the expression, "receive" it, is unhappily not at present applicable to Roman Catholic countries, they are at least taught so to regard it. And they find this belief in the Bible prevailing around them. Whatever, in process of time, appeals to their own consciences in the Bible, or whatever evidence tending to prove its truth strikes their own minds, goes to confirm this view. They adopt it as it is presented to them, or with but slight modifications. They accept the Bible as a whole, and do not think of decomposing it, or of confining their faith to those portions concerning which they have personal grounds of assurance. The case of the heathen, or the sceptic, who by his own reading of the Bible is led to believe in its inspiration, is not in reality very different. The heathen, however much he may have been cut off from human teachers, at least knows that the book whose words come home with such searching power to his heart, is the sacred book of a religion. Wonderful as the book might seem to him, even if he never viewed it in this connexion, he could not regard it as he does when he knows the power which it has exerted, the place which it has won for itself, in the hearts and minds of multitudes. So, again, the sceptic in Christian

countries who comes to believe in the Scriptures, has found, broadly speaking, two views ready-made, a Christian and an anti-Christian one. Most often he has not analyzed either to any great extent, or concerned himself much even with variations on either side. Some one or two truths, or features of Divine revelation, have commended themselves to his mind, and he has been so much struck with the justification of the Christian position afforded in these particulars, that he has gone over to the Christian side. But even where the inquirer has become convinced after very full investigation, he has used the labours, and found support in the faith, of others.

Examination is needed to determine the extent to which reliance can rightly be placed on such common judgments. Undoubtedly they may lead us to accept doctrines and opinions in the lump which need limitation and definition. But I venture to assert that they justly form an important part of the grounds for believing the inspiration of Holy Scripture.

We have seen in the last chapter that even in elementary acts (so to speak) of spiritual vision, the individual is rightly guided and confirmed by the spiritual vision of others; and thus, in an act of adhesion to Christian faith in its simplest form, sympathy with others co-operates. The assistance of the

many becomes more necessary in proportion to the complexity of the elements on which an adequate judgment depends. No individual, or small group of individuals, could ever have effected satisfactorily the selection of the books which were to form the canon of Holy Scripture. It was necessarily the work of the common Christian consciousness (that I may use at present no more definite term). And so as to those general propositions respecting the character of Holy Scripture, to which allusion has been made. By the very nature of the case, a sure conviction as to the spiritual harmony and completeness of Scripture could only be won through varied experience. A revelation so great and full, with all its consequences, could only be gradually apprehended. The truth, which was set forth in many parts and in divers manners, needed to be submitted to the verification of many minds and consciences in many generations. And this work is not fully accomplished to this day. On the one hand, the claims of Holy Scripture are being tested more rigorously than ever; on the other hand, they are ever receiving fresh confirmation from the manner in which it is able to meet the needs of new ages. The depth and fulness of its truths are rendered more manifest in the light of new circumstances and wider knowledge.

If the dependence of the individual upon the authority of a common judgment extended only to the formation of the canon in the past, that authority, however embodied, would be worthy of being ever remembered by individual Christians of all succeeding ages as having laid them under obligation for a good which they could not have procured for themselves. But, in reality, it is through the continued living power of the common judgment of Christians, which is the result of the experience and perception of each and all, that we severally first receive the Bible, as conveying an authoritative declaration to us of the will of God and way of salvation. And this same force to the end supports our faith, and enables us, although it is our duty and privilege to examine and know for ourselves—to attain to a far fuller and sounder estimate of the Bible than would, if we stood alone, be possible.

I shall have occasion, in the next chapter, to dwell on the importance of the historical testimony of the early Church to the authenticity of the writings of the New Testament. The Jewish Church bears a somewhat similar testimony to those of the Old, though its force is slighter, owing to the much more remote times from which the books claim to come down. Again, the testimony of Christians, not only

of early generations, but of all times (as well as of the Jewish Church, so far as the Old Testament is concerned), to the moral and spiritual characteristics of Holy Scripture, quickens and confirms our individual perception of these. There is, besides, another authority, which combines naturally with the last, that of Christian scholars. We know that among those who have most thoroughly investigated the historical evidence affecting the Christian records and their internal character, there are many competent men who have come to conclusions wholly favourable to their *substantial* truth. To speak broadly, we observe that the line of cleavage dividing those who believe and those who deny this, is not between men possessed of high critical acumen and great learning and others destitute of these qualities, but between those who start from different sets of principles, who are, or are not, marked by a certain temper and attitude of mind. Of these principles, of this temper and mental attitude, the plain man is as able to judge as the scholar. He can know for himself the reality of things spiritual, the import of the Christian revelation, the power of the faith in the lives of men. And, therefore, he does not act wilfully or blindly if, being convinced on these points, he accepts, with whatever reserve

may seem fitting as to points of detail, the judgment of believing scholars, and not of others, on the historical evidence; for he holds the truth of the same premises as the former, and has, therefore, a perfectly reasonable confidence that, if he could go through the necessary investigations, he would arrive at the same conclusions as they.

Building on these foundations, the individual Christian may, it seems to me, have a well-grounded belief that Holy Scripture contains a true revelation, and that it is marked by a general unity and completeness and uniqueness, which prove a special Divine guidance and inspiration.

The question for us now is, whether anything more
More definite theories of inspiration. precise than this can be asserted concerning the authority of Holy Scripture? Or, if this is not possible at present, whether we may hope hereafter to attain to a fuller and more definite view, and what must be the process of doing so. There can be no doubt that the belief in the general truth and inspiration of Scripture, which I have indicated, falls short of what has been commonly held. It has been almost universally, and is still widely, believed by professing Christians that Holy Scripture is completely free from error of every kind. There were, indeed, those in the ancient

Church, especially the school of the great Origen, who held that many of the narratives of the Old Testament, if supposed to have been given solely for their literal meaning, were unworthy of Divine inspiration. They thought that some of them were not even meant to be taken as historically true. Too much, however, must not be made of this exception in reference to modern controversies. For their purpose in attributing to such portions a purely allegorical meaning was to invest them still more distinctively with a Divine, oracular character.

I have avoided the use of the term "verbal" inspiration because it seems to me apt to mislead. Many profess to renounce the theory of verbal inspiration whose own view does not seem to differ essentially from that of those to whom this doctrine has been generally attributed. Few now, at all events, would be willing to allow that they held "verbal" inspiration, in the sense that the very words to be written down were supernaturally imparted. The inspiration is, and probably at all times commonly has been, supposed—at least by men of any power of theological thought and vividness of human experience—to have been of a "dynamic" (as opposed to a "mechanical") nature; that is, it is conceived as a stimulus imparted to, and a guiding and controlling influence exerted

over, the natural faculties of those who were chosen to be the organs of Divine communications, so that their individual characteristics were made use of, and had much play given to them. The question which practically divides men, and which alone concerns us, is as to the result. An inspiration which is supposed to be complete and all-pervading throughout the whole volume of Scripture, and to have secured either entire immunity from error, or symbolic truth, in every part, may not altogether unsuitably be described as "verbal." That is the sense, I believe, in which the term "verbal inspiration" is often understood. And in that sense, it is the view which is still most common among Christians. It might also be described as the doctrine of "plenary" inspiration, were it not that a theory of plenary inspiration, deserving of special mention, has been sketched out in recent times, which allows for defectiveness, and which might even be consistent with the acknowledgment of positive errors, in the several parts. Defects, arising from the age and personal character of the several writers have, according to the view to which I allude, not been prevented; but they have been over-ruled, nay, chosen, by a special Providence, so that in the whole harmony of the Scriptures we have a representation

of Divine truth, which is (so far as it extends) perfect and complete.¹

We have to consider in what manner any of these theories of inspiration may conceivably be justified, and what, generally, our attitude towards them in the present day ought to be.

Now, it may seem that if we have been right in appealing to the judgment of the Christian consciousness at all, the question of the infallibility of Holy Scripture must be considered closed, since Christians have almost universally believed this doctrine. But we must make sure of the true extent of the authority of the Christian consciousness. It has had abundant opportunity for arriving at a sound conviction as to the general worth and truth of Holy Scripture. But the questions on the solution of which any more precise definitions, if they are to be soundly made, must depend, have never been in reality submitted to it. As many have urged in recent times, the Church has never formulated any doctrine of inspiration. The common opinion on the subject, which has grown up, by a not unnatural tendency, in un-

¹ This is the doctrine set forth by Bishop Westcott, in ch. i. of his *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, and which he seeks to work out, so far as the four Gospels are concerned, in the remainder of the book. This conception of the Gospel harmony is the characteristic and governing idea of the whole book.

critical ages, has no claim to be regarded as *de fide*. It is not strange that the belief of Christians on the point, while substantially correct, should in some particulars have gone beyond what there was good ground for, and that its exact conception and definition should need revision with a view to perfect accuracy of thought. Only after much controversy, and the fullest sifting of arguments, and long pondering of the points at issue, could such a result be achieved. And this process has never yet been gone through.

It should be clearly understood that no rough and ready, no short, and at the same time, convincing, proof can possibly be given of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, in either of the senses of the term above defined. Such proofs have been, and still are, attempted, though to a much less degree than formerly. One such, respecting the Old Testament Scriptures, deserves to be approached with peculiar reverence. It consists of an appeal to the authority of our Lord Himself.

Now, it is necessary here to distinguish between the general drift of our Lord's teaching concerning the Old Testament and inferences from particular expressions. Of the general place which He assigned to the Old Testament there can be no doubt. He attributed

sanctity to its precepts even when He enlarged or superseded them; He asserted the relation of its types and prophecies to Himself, and the Divine necessity that they must be fulfilled. But in any attempt to go beyond this, and to prove its infallibility on points of history from His words, dependence has to be placed on exact turns of expression in a few passages. And disposed and anxious though we would be to believe that we have in the Gospels a thoroughly faithful record of His sayings, we certainly cannot assume without proof that accuracy in their reports throughout, which would be required for the purpose of the argument now before us. Nor can such proof be supplied in any readily available form, if it can at all. Let us suppose, however, that we can be sure that we have our Lord's precise words in those instances in which He seems to be most directly contradicted by conclusions of modern criticism. These do not appear to be many in number; and we shall not be warranted in widening the area of divergence.

Lastly, we must raise the question whether we ought to expect a revelation even from our Lord Himself on such points at all. I pass over the consideration that supposing He in His human condition had full knowledge about them, it would yet have

caused the greatest perplexity to His hearers, and hindered His true work, if He had used any language except that which corresponded to the ideas of His time. So far as we can see, it would have been inevitable that He should have practised economies; and it seems more reverent to suppose that ignorance on such matters was involved in the mystery of the Incarnation. Each part of His human nature was, we believe, perfectly united to and irradiated by the Eternal Word to the utmost extent of its capacity. Even His flesh experienced the effect of the union, Our very nerves and the habits of our bodies acquire a tendency to evil through our own sins or the inherited effects of the sin of the race. From this our Lord was wholly free. At the other end of the scale, the will and moral nature—wherein we are all of us by creation likest God, and most capable of communion with Him, and which are most closely associated with our personality, if they are not, indeed, inseparable from it—were in Him, we would almost dare to say, the innermost seat of the union. Between these comes the intellect. Doubtless in Him it was illumined and its powers were quickened in a most marvellous manner. Yet there was a range of knowledge—partly such as had been or should be possessed in different fragments by different members

of the race, partly such as could only be discovered after the labour of generations—to which His mind could not have attained without the subversal of the laws of its finite nature.

Another line of argument, which has been very common, would, if valid, serve for the New Testament as well as the Old. It is based on *à priori* considerations as to the mode in which a revelation must have been given, if given at all; and in general character it resembles that often used for the infallibility of the Pope or of the Roman Church. It runs somewhat as follows. Man cannot be left to pick and choose in the Scriptures. His powers are not equal to the task of judging what has and what has not been Divinely delivered. He needs an infallible guide. A revelation is useless unless we can be perfectly certain what it is.

I will not stop to inquire whether this argument gives a fair representation of the method of those against whom it is mainly directed. What I would more especially urge is that all such arguments are condemned by the principle which Bishop Butler¹ maintains with such force against those who based objections to revelation on the manner in which it has been delivered, the fact of its evidences not being

¹ *Analogy*, Part II. ch. iii.

so cogent that all must receive it, the knowledge of it not having been made universal, and so forth. His simple reply is "that we have no principles of reason upon which to judge beforehand how it were to be expected revelation should have been left." If this principle condemns the *à priori* reasoning on this subject of objectors, it equally condemns the similar reasoning of defenders. We have no right to say that that is no help towards the knowledge of God, and of His secret things, which is not all the help that we should desire; or that authority is impossible if the [same spiritually-illuminated reason, which must, in any case, in the first instance, decide upon its claims, must afterwards continue watchful lest it should be used in improper ways, and extended beyond its true sphere. Moreover, we have seen that one mode in which a revelation may be given is in the broad characteristics of a peculiar history marked by special Divine guidance. There seems no ground for supposing that such an organ of revelation as this must necessarily, in order to discharge its purpose, be free from all admixture of error. The records of such a history, even though they should have been guarded from mistake by no Divine interposition, may adequately convey the revelation.

The decision, then, of such questions as the scientific

and historical accuracy of the Bible, or of any parts of it, must be *à posteriori*; that is, we must endeavour to see what are the actual facts. And it follows from this, also, that on many points, especially in an age when progress is being made in science and in historical investigation, we may have to keep our judgment in suspense for a long time, and that on some, possibly, a final settlement will never be arrived at.

This caution seems not unnecessary even as regards the former topic here indicated, the relation of the Bible to science. It has, indeed, The Bible and science. become a commonplace now with Christian teachers preachers and writers, that "the Bible was not intended to teach science;" and it is generally acknowledged that its language in the narrative of creation—the chief instance in which Holy Scripture comes in contact with science—is to a large extent symbolical. But at the same time there is a common disposition to maintain that, if the symbolism be rightly interpreted, there will be found to be a remarkable correspondence between the course of events indicated in the first chapter of Genesis and that to which science points. Thus it is admitted that the days of creation were not literal days; but it is contended that the order of the works on the successive

days is the actual order in which changes in our globe took place, and plants and animals and their species came into being. There is a natural reluctance in religious minds to admit a positive error of any kind in Holy Scripture, just as we are unwilling to recognize a fault in one whom we admire and love, however slight it may be, however little it may affect the real worth of the character as a whole. And we may surely be permitted to cherish such a prepossession in regard to Holy Scriptur^e, provided that it only leads us to demand sufficient proof of alleged errors in it, and that it does not make us over hasty and confident in arguments to defend it on such points. Thus, in the example to which reference has just been made there is a danger both of exaggerating the resemblance between the order of the works of the days of creation and the order which evolution, or other scientific theories, set forth, and of founding too much upon it. It is not improbable that various obvious characteristics of the great kingdoms of Nature, and their genera and species, might have suggested an arrangement roughly similar to that which true scientific study would dictate. And such a similarity, supposing it to exist, must, therefore, not be too readily assumed to be a note of inspiration.¹

¹ What is here said seems to me to apply in a measure even to the

These remarks have appeared to be necessary because the belief that Biblical statements will prove to be in complete harmony with science, at least if a certain amount of symbolism in the language be allowed for, seems still to be too confidently held in many quarters, and even some thoughtful men appear to be rather too hasty in using arguments which make in this direction. Yet there can be no doubt that much has been learnt from the failure of the mistaken attempts to oppose discoveries of science on the ground of inconsistency with Scripture. We most of us now perceive that the foundations of our Christian faith would not be really undermined, even though Holy Scripture should be shown to contain positive errors on questions of science. We are entitled to cherish the belief that Scripture may in the end appear to have been preserved from serious conflict with science in a way only to be attributed to a Providence and inspiration which guided its composition. But it is coming to be generally understood, that no objections based on our interpretation of Scripture ought to be, or can with success be, put forward, to limit the absolute freedom of science in the investigations and speculations proper to her own sphere.

treatment of the subject by Reusch, *Nature and the Bible*, though he is in general very sensible and cautious.

The question of the probable effect of historical studies and improved methods of criticism on our estimate of the Bible, is a more difficult one; and we may on this account be the more thankful for the experience already gained in the controversies respecting the inspiration of Holy Scripture, raised by the progress of scientific discovery. For here, also, suspense of judgment is required. We must wait for the results of careful investigation before we can arrive at a just decision as to the measure of historical accuracy which is necessary in the communication of a revelation. At the same time, the truth of the Bible as a Divine revelation is far more intimately involved with its historical than with its scientific truth. While from the nature of historical evidence, our judgment upon it must inevitably be influenced by our moral and spiritual beliefs, and view of the general purport of the history recorded. We have already noticed the importance which this principle has in connexion with the recognition of the supernatural element in the Bible. But to speak more generally, we may say that a treatment of history which confines itself to the outward aspects of events and of national characteristics, and their external relations, and fails to seize the true law of spiritual movement, is not worthy of the name of history.

This applies with peculiar force to theories of the history of the appearance of Christianity in the world.

There are, indeed, many problems connected with the New Testament which have not as yet been finally solved even for those who ^{The New Testament.} are able to look at them from the point of view of Christian faith. Some of the most important of these relate to the composition of the Gospels, and affect their trustworthiness in points of detail. The work of a scholarship which does not reject the supernatural, has (it must be admitted) not been quite so completely done, as appears often to be imagined by writers and speakers on the side of faith, who have only a general acquaintance with the actual position of critical inquiries. Too sweeping assertions are sometimes made as to the effect which controversy has already had in establishing on all points traditional beliefs. Yet all that is vital to our faith has been (we believe) secured, and we can wait with calmness the final adjustment of our views on what yet remains uncertain.

It will be necessary to speak at a little greater length of those new theories of the dates and authorship of books of the Old Testa- ^{The Old Testament.} ment and reconstructions of Israelitish history, which

have of late attracted so much attention. Now the place which the Old Testament should hold in the faith of Christians was one of the first questions which occupied the mind of the Church. As early as the second century she was compelled to take up a definite position on the subject, on the one hand by having to determine her relation to the tendencies of Judaizing Christians, and on the other by the pressure of the Gnostic heresies, which asserted in varying degrees an opposition between the Old Testament and the Gospel. And on certain fundamental points she spoke in no faltering tones. Under the guidance of her teachers, having regard to the Lord's words and her apostolical traditions, and by the exercise of her own powers of spiritual discernment, she maintained emphatically the permanent worth of the Old Testament for the moral and spiritual edification of Christians, and its indissoluble connexion with the New, as an integral part of one scheme of Divine revelation and redemption, and in particular as pointing and leading up to the coming of Christ and His kingdom. Moreover, the general verdict of Christians to the present time has fully confirmed this estimate. And no convinced Christian believer—so it seems to me—can doubt of the truth of these fundamental positions, if he has—I will not say, respect for the

judgments of the Church—but proper distrust of any views which would place him in direct conflict with the great mass of his fellow-believers in the present and former ages.

Now, it may be said that those who start with such a conviction as this must be seriously disabled for the task of appreciating the results of new historical investigations. Undoubtedly there is danger that they may be too much prejudiced against them. But I would urge that they may have one great advantage for arriving at a just view of the facts as a whole. That belief with respect to the Old Testament which has been described is, as it were, the registration of a whole class of facts regarding the Old Testament—of its special moral and spiritual traits and unique characteristics—which are likely to be too much ignored by those whose studies lead them chiefly to mark the points of similarity and connexion between the history and religion of Israel and those of other ancient peoples. It will be very generally admitted, that the view we form of the inner relations of the religious ideas in the Old Testament must enter into our final conclusions respecting the course of the history. In a region where the definite external facts are scanty, and we have in the formation of our theories to rely on many comparatively slight indi-

cations, we cannot afford to neglect such an important class of indications as this. We are aware that "subjectivity" may enter into our estimate of their significance; and we must do what we can to guard against its misleading effects. But do what we will, we shall be likely to judge differently as to the actual law of development of thought and belief in the Old Testament, according as our moral and spiritual temper and general principles regarding the Divine government and man are those, say, of Oehler on the one hand, or of Kuenen on the other.¹

But while these considerations appear to be very important, it is also necessary to urge that time and patience are required before it can be decided how far new literary and historical theories may or may not be compatible with those essential points in our prevailing Christian belief respecting the Old Testament, which have been mentioned. The *degree* of divergence in the views we are asked to accept,

¹ Oehler contends that a true view of the progress of Old Testament revelation in general and of separate doctrines is inconsistent with the supposition that the Pentateuch is a comparatively recent production. See his *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. i. Introd. § 3, n. (1), pp. 13, 14, in Eng. transl. To this passage Professor W. R. Smith adds the significant note: "The importance of the history of religious ideas for Old Testament criticism is specially urged by Kuenen, *Theol. Tijdschrift*, vol. iv. p. 391, f." This will explain the selection of the two names in the text.

from what the Old Testament writings seem to claim for themselves, is here of primary significance. The theory, as it has sometimes been baldly stated, that the Book of Deuteronomy, not only in form but in substance, belongs to the age of Josiah, and the Levitical law to that of Ezra, would certainly seem to be wholly subversive of the belief that the Old Testament truly represents to us the actual course of the Divine education of Israel, and thus, also, that it conveys a Divine revelation. It is also extremely hard to imagine, even when every allowance is made for differences of standard in matters of literary honesty between that age and ours, that men of such moral elevation as the writers must have been, should, in the interests of religion, have promulgated what was wholly, or mainly, their own work under the name of the great legislator of antiquity. But the same objections do not lie against the supposition that old materials were (so to speak) edited with more or less considerable embellishments of literary form, or ancient practices modified and supplemented with a view to new circumstances, and reduced to a formal code, in a later age.

Let us sum up the results of this chapter. The Divine characteristics of the Holy Scriptures, and of the revelation which they contain, appeal to the heart

and conscience. While the historical testimony to the authenticity of the writings borne by generations nearer to the times when the writings were composed is a point not to be overlooked, and is of special force in regard to the New Testament, their moral and spiritual power have been felt by each succeeding age. The individual perceives these; but, however great his own fitness in every respect for forming an appreciative estimate might be, the Scriptures could not be to him through his own intuitions alone what they do become through the common faith of Christians. All that is most essential in the common judgment remains quite unshaken by modern controversies. In part it is beyond their reach; in part the work of Christian scholars has presented a view of the evidence which fully commends itself on the soundest principles of reason as the true one, to those who start from the necessary presuppositions. This common judgment, and our assurance that we may rely on its substantial truth, are the fruit of the thought and life of the whole body of Christians from the beginning, down to the labours of some of the most eminent among Christian believers in the latest time. They are a possession of unspeakable value to us all.

The results yet to be won in settling moot points,

in revising whatever needs revision, in removing whatever is unsound and baseless in accepted theories of inspiration, will in like manner be attained by the joint critical labours and by the faith of many. The spirit of the most pure scientific criticism has its part to play. But when the utmost has been done that can be to ascertain the exact evidence remaining to us on every historical point, there will probably still be broad divisions in the estimate formed of the significance of the evidence, the grouping of the facts, the whole theory of the sacred history, between persons who know equally well what the evidence is. These differences, as in the case of many questions that have been already the subject of much controversy, will depend on the absence or presence in the mind of fundamental assumptions, the justification for which is of quite another kind, and on which the whole Christian consciousness is fully entitled to pronounce.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

IN considering the authority of Holy Scripture, we were compelled to take account, not only of that inherent authority which a Divine revelation must necessarily possess, and which must belong to Holy Scripture when once we believe it to be, or in so far as we believe it to contain, such a revelation, but also of the authority by the aid of which it is received. For it appears that even those Christians who profess not to recognize any authority but that of Holy Scripture itself, do yet, in fact, largely depend upon the faith of the great body of Christians of former, and the present, times for their acceptance of it. Nor can any one who will consider the matter dispassionately maintain that this is the whole account of the debt which the individual owes to authority in regard to his religious convictions. For the interpretation of Scripture, the solution of the questions which it suggests, the

Considerations which suggest the general idea of Church authority.

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selection of the salient points of the Christian revelation, and the embodiment of the whole system of truth in a form in which it can be grasped by the intellect, no Christian is independent of the support and guidance supplied by beliefs that have been communicated to him. Moreover, if these beliefs are not to mislead, instead of helping, it is evident that they ought to be the outcome of the genuine Christian consciousness.

These considerations raise a presumption in favour of the view that in the Christian Church regarded as a visible society, an organ has been provided for giving voice to the Christian consciousness, together with safeguards against the abuse of its authority, and guarantees of its legitimate exercise. At the same time, it is important to note what conception of the nature and ground of Church authority is suggested by the line of reasoning which we have pursued. In order that the decrees of the Church may claim our obedience, we must have reason to believe that they are the expression of the common convictions and judgments of the believing people,—the “Spirit-bearing body.”¹

¹ This expression is a favourite one of the late Bishop Moberly's, in his valuable and suggestive Bampton Lectures on *The Administration of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ*. Indeed, it contains in germ the argument of the whole work.

The authoritative declaration of beliefs concerning things unseen seems to be a necessary function of every religious society, to a greater or less degree, according to the extent and definiteness of the faith inspiring it. The possession in common of these beliefs is the basis on which its members are united; and the society exists for the maintenance and, it may be, the spread of the beliefs. Those brought up within it are instructed in these beliefs; or, at least, they are moulded by the influences of its customs and prevailing habit of mind. Moreover, if any question should arise, as can hardly fail to be sometimes the case, regarding points which affect its idea or constitution, and for which no express provision has been made in its original charter (if it possesses one), or on which there is no accepted view, the whole body, or the governing portion of it, may well have to decide the matter.

But while the exercise of this function of teaching is inseparable from the associations formed under the influence of all religions, Christianity gives it special importance. For, in the first place, the existence of a Christian society, conceive it as we may, belongs to the essence of the Christian creed. Christ came to found a kingdom upon earth. It was to be a spiritual society, that is to say, a society bound

together, primarily, by faith in and love to Himself, and grace received from Him, and by the love of its members to one another. Yet it was to be a visible society also, for the inward principles, possessing the mind and working upon the heart, must receive outward embodiment.

This view of the work of Christ seems to arise so plainly from His very words and course of action, and from the effect which He produced in the world, as it was manifested in the centuries following His appearing, beginning with the apostolic age itself, that it is hard to understand how it can be overlooked and explained away as it is by multitudes of modern Christians.

This can only, it seems to me, be accounted for by the strong tendency there naturally is to find reasons for acquiescing in the state of things around us. We do not like to acknowledge that the relations of Christians to each other in our own country, and the general condition of Christendom, are so different from what our Lord intended. And the effort of realizing that the partial paralysis of the Church's life, caused by the present extreme divisions and disorder, may only be temporary, and that there may yet again be an approximation to the fulfilment of the true ideal of the Church, is often too great for our imagination and

our faith in view of the obstacles which stand in the way. Happily many, to whom the idea of the visible Church has not been by early training familiar, are in this generation striving to grasp it. The study of the New Testament in a more historical spirit has forwarded this, because men have thus been forced to perceive the place of the Christian society in our Lord's plan. And again, the fuller sense of the significance of social ties and sacredness of social obligations, and the clearer recognition of the truth that mankind and the nations and races which compose it have an organic life, which characterize our age by comparison with other recent ones, have contributed to the same result. Still more may be hoped for from increased spiritual life and activity.

Now this Divine kingdom—whether as it was in its pristine vigour, or as it is, sadly maimed and divided, but full of life still in its several portions, or, as it may be hereafter, restored to a unity and purity equal to, or greater than, any it has ever enjoyed—exists for the salvation of mankind, for the conversion and edification of souls. And one chief means whereby it accomplishes this work is “the manifestation of the truth.”

Christianity has thus given a new depth to the very idea of religious truth, and imparted a new sense of

its importance to men. It is the duty of the Christian Church to preserve and communicate the truth. And to this end, the Church, in her corporate capacity, must apprehend the truth, and may be called upon to define it.

Moreover, if we believe in any sense in the dispensation of the Spirit, we must suppose that there resides within the Christian body, relatively to the world outside, a peculiar aptitude and power for knowing the truth, a special Divine illumination. The gathering together in this bond of a multitude of persons to whom spiritual gifts are specially pledged must involve this, unless we suppose them entirely, or almost entirely, to fail to respond to and make use of the Divine graces that are bestowed upon them.

From the general idea of the Christian society and its necessary work, we have gathered what must be its responsibilities in regard to the teaching of truth, and its fitness for the discharge of its responsibilities. It is hardly necessary to add that this view of her character and office is expressly set before us by St. Paul, where he writes that "the Church of the living God" is "the pillar and ground of the truth."¹

It is evident, however, that the general considerations to which we have thus far confined ourselves leave many grave questions undecided. To what

¹ Tim. iii. 15.

extent may the Church expect the Divine guidance? In what manner is she intended to discharge her teaching office? If under any circumstances she is infallible, what are those circumstances? The mere quotation of a few texts, with which even eminent writers think to prove the Church's infallibility, and to dismiss the matter,¹ will not satisfy us. Christ's pledge that the Church shall not fail,² and that she shall never be bereft of His presence,³ are precious promises. But they do not necessarily mean more than that she shall not be suffered to fall into such serious and widespread and permanent error as would destroy her power of fulfilling her mission and mortally wound her own inner life. If they do imply more than this, it must be shown why and under what conditions they do so. Similarly, if our Lord's words, "He that heareth you heareth Me,"⁴ involve a complete bestowal upon others of His own authority, we need to know who may claim it.

¹ See Cardinal Wiseman, *Essays on Various Subjects* (pub. 1888), p. 398. Even Dr. Pusey seems to found too much on these texts. See *Eirenicon*, p. 37, and *The Rule of Faith*, Preface to Third Edition, p. xlvii. The texts principally used are those quoted in the following notes.

² "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it [the Church]" (Matt. xvi. 18).

³ "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 30).

⁴ Luke x. 16.

The subject bristles with difficulties which the definitions contained in the formularies of different Churches do not remove, and which seem to be very imperfectly realized for the most part by the many persons of different schools who make general statements on the points in dispute. Moreover, it is hard to disentangle the various questions to be considered, so as to secure clearness in the discussion. It might seem proper to begin with an examination of the true idea and definition of the Church. This, however, would involve us in discussions of too extensive a kind, connected more or less with the whole of the Church's life and mission. We will, therefore, (1) in the first place endeavour, from a consideration of the actual history of Christianity, to determine the general nature of the work which it is open to the Church to do as a teacher of truth, and which seems to be required of her, if the needs of her children are to be supplied. This head will include the relation of her authority—if she has authority—to that of the Scriptures. (2) We will next, with an eye as before to facts, discuss the means by which she may be able to speak—whether by councils or otherwise; the guarantees which it may be possible for her to give of the soundness of her teaching, the proofs, in short, which she may be

able to offer of her authority. We will then see (3) what the character of the Church must be in order that she may fulfil the office thus sketched out for her.

It must be remembered that throughout we shall be mainly occupied not with the question of Church authority as it directly affects different individuals, according to their varying circumstances, but with the general conception of the Church as an organ for the preservation and ascertainment of religious truth. Incidentally, however, we may touch upon the relation of the individual to the existing Church, to some portion of which he belongs, or whose teaching and claims he may judge from without.

SECTION I.

The Nature of the Church's Prophetical Office.

First, then, we have to consider what idea can be formed of the Church's office as a guide to, and teacher of, truth. Are we to suppose her function to be simply that of preserving with a faithful memory a deposit which she has received? Or is there scope for something more than this literal fidelity, for a fresher, more original setting forth of truth as

new needs arise? And if there is, what are the just limits of her power in this respect? She is called the interpreter of Scripture. In what sense can she be this, and to what extent is her interpretation required?

Now one of the first tasks which the Church performed was the formation of the canon of New Testament Scriptures. This is not the place to enter into discussions concerning the evidence for the authenticity of the several books of the canon; nor are we at present even discussing in general the competency of the Church for determining the canon. My object at this stage is to lay stress upon the fact that she did undoubtedly do this work, and to point out what powers were thus called into play, what principles guided the selection of the writings included.

Appeal to the early history of the Church.
(a) The formation of the New Testament Canon.

In turning our thoughts to this subject, we cannot forget that a similar process had already been gone through in the formation of the canon of the Old Testament by the Jewish Church. The history of it is very obscure; but so far as it can be traced its general features resemble those which we shall observe in the analogous work of the Christian Church. That is to say, the selection of the books was determined partly through tradition as to their authorship, which

attributed them to men whose inspired character gave them authority, partly by immediate recognition of their spiritual power. And, further, the decision in the case of some writings of minor importance was arrived at with more difficulty than in the case of the rest. In rabbinic writings belonging to a time subsequent to the Christian era we still meet with echoes of the controversies as to the reception of Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and Esther.

The Christian Church received the canon of the Old Testament from the Jewish, and she did not investigate or revise it. Nevertheless, she did alter the estimate prevailing among the Jews of the relative value of the different portions, and introduced a conception of the source of their authority which did fuller justice to the living presence throughout of the Divine Spirit. This point affords so good an example of the working of the common Christian consciousness, and seems also to have attracted so little attention, that we may suitably linger upon it for a few moments. Among the Jews the *Thorah*, or Law, always held a higher position than the remaining two sections into which the Scriptures were divided, the *Prophets* and *Hagiographa*. In the law, they found the primary source of Divine revelation; while, in the rest, the principles of the law were, they held, more fully ex-

pounded and illustrated. They even represented the value of these writings as arising from their being an embodiment of tradition handed down orally from the time of Moses. The Prophets and Hagiographa, like the traditions of the scribes, were called cabbalah (tradition).¹

There may, perhaps, be a trace of this view, or of the feeling which encouraged it, in the application of the name νόμος to the other parts of the Scriptures of which we have examples in the New Testament.² Such a usage would arise from the law being regarded as the *norm of revelation*. This conception of revelation as primarily a law may also explain how the aspect of Christianity which seems to have been most readily seized by many of the earliest Christians was that it was a new law.³

The view, however, of the prophets which has just been indicated was utterly uncongenial to, and impossible for, Christian thought. The fresh and living

¹ See Schürer, *Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, ii. pp. 252, 253, and Taylor, *Sayings of Jewish Fathers*, p. 120. Cf. also Professor W. R. Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 446; and as regards Philo's view of the pre-eminence of the law, see Bishop Westcott, *The Bible in the Church*, pp. 32, 34, where he gives a special reason for the distinction, which may have operated in the case of the Alexandrian Jews.

² John x. 34; xii. 34; xv. 25; Rom. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 21.

³ An illustration of this is afforded in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*.

inspiration of the prophets is fully recognized in the New Testament, as it is also in early Christian writers generally.¹ The new knowledge which the Christian Church had gained of the power of the Spirit of God, her own experience of His operations, enabled Christians to understand better, and to believe heartily in, His working upon the hearts of the prophets. Moreover, the new perception of their special function as witnesses to Christ enhanced the sense of their inspiration.

Thus the Christian Church formed her own view of the ancient Scriptures which she inherited. Yet the existence of a Bible in possession could not but affect in various ways the formation of a fresh canon of sacred writings. On the one hand, the conception had already been created of divinely authoritative and inspired writings. Those which were to be the sacred writings of the new covenant had to be admitted to this class, to be brought under an idea which was

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21; Heb. iii. 7; x. 15, and in regard to types (ix. 8). As examples from Christian writers of second century, see *Athenag. Leg.*, ch. xviii., who quotes Prov. xxi. 1, with the words, *φησὶ τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα*. See also last passage from treatise against Artemon, quoted Euseb., v. 28, which appears to refer to the Old Testament. Philo's view of the source of the authority of the prophets seems rather to have resembled that of Christians than of the rabbis. See references in Westcott, as above, note 1, though he does not himself make the remark.

familiar; or, to change the image, they had to be raised to, and placed upon, the same pedestal as those of the old. The way, therefore, was in a measure prepared for the recognition of their true character. On the other hand, the Old Testament supplied, to some extent, the want of a Bible among the first Christians, and would thus retard the full reception of new writings. However much the new might be prized, there would be a certain natural disinclination at first to give them like honour with that which was paid to writings venerable from antiquity. Moreover, in so far as the form of the new candidates for canonicity did not correspond with that of the old, the difference would hinder the perception of their inspiration. For instance, the apostolic Epistles did not bear the outward marks of inspiration, did not claim it by their very style of utterance and address, in the way that the writings of the prophets did. In the early Church, also, there were prophets,¹ and it is probable that writings or sayings which were of an Apocalyptic or distinctly prophetic nature would be among those whose inspiration would be most

¹ Not to dwell on the many allusions to the gift of prophecy in the New Testament, it may be noted that in 2 Pet. iii. 1, we seem to have a reference to the utterances of Christian prophets. The language of *The Teaching of the Apostles* (chs. x.-xiii., xv.) concerning the prophets, is now, also, well known.

readily perceived. It agrees with this, that the Apocalypse of St. John is the first book of the New Testament which is quoted as inspired.¹

From the first, however, there was one point on which no Christian could feel any doubt. The sayings of the Lord Himself possessed Divine authority. Even the scanty remains of the sub-apostolic age afford abundant evidence of the position accorded to them. Thus the first stage in the history of the recognition of the Divine oracles of the new dispensation has been aptly described as that of the formation of the "Canon of the Lord's Words."² Longer time would be necessary for the perception to grow, that narratives of His deeds and generally the account of His whole manifestation among men, though given in the words of disciples, were not less full of Divine light.

Again, the position of the apostles would make it certain that their letters would be treasured from the time they were written; and it was entirely in ac-

¹ Justin M., *Dialogue*, c. 81; Ἰωάννης ἐν Ἀποκάλυψει γενομένη αὐτῷ . . . προεφήτευσεν. It is probably also the first book of the New Testament on which a commentary was written, namely, by Melito of Sardis; see Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 26. Cf. Weiss, *Introduction* i. pp. 63, 71.

² Weiss, *ibid.* On the supreme place which the words, works and whole account of the life and character of our Lord holds, and must ever hold, in the sacred volume see a striking and beautiful passage in Newman's *Prophetical Office*, lect. xii. pp. 356, ff.

cordance with the literary habits of the age that collections should be made of them. Doubtless, such a collection of the letters of St. Paul existed very early. We know that Marcion (circ. A.D. 130) either made such a collection for himself, or (which is far more probable) adapted to his own purposes a collection already current.¹ But we cannot venture to assert that an adequate conception of the inspiration of the letters of St. Paul, or of those of other apostles, had as yet been formed.

In the Church of the age of Irenæus and Tertullian our four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the bulk of the Epistles, and the Apocalypse, held an acknowledged position as inspired writings. The manner in which these two writers speak of them affords clear evidence of the consensus on the subject.

The conflict with Gnosticism helped to give definiteness to the faith of the Church on this as on other points. For there were also writings for which the heretics claimed recognition. The note on which the Church insisted was apostolicity; they would receive only that which proceeded from an apostle, or from

¹ I say that this is more probable, for he pursued a similar plan in regard to the Gospel according to St. Luke. For Professor Sanday (among others), in *The Gospels in the Second Century*, ch. 8, has conclusively shown that Marcion's Gospel is an adaptation, and not the basis, of our St. Luke.

some companion of apostles, who would convey their testimony and teaching.¹

These points are very clearly illustrated in the Muratorian fragment on the canon. Internal evidence shows that this document had Rome or its neighbourhood for its birthplace, and that it should be assigned to the latter part of the second or the beginning of the third century. Bishop Lightfoot, in his latest work, has attributed it to Hippolytus of Portus.² This, the earliest formal list of authoritative writings of the New Testament that has come down to us, was plainly framed because heresy and heretical writings were rife. Genuine apostolicity, in the sense above described, is the test applied. Hence St. Luke's connexion with St. Paul is noticed, and St. Mark's connexion with St. Peter appears to have been the subject of the broken sentence with which the fragment begins. The *Shepherd* is excluded as not even by a companion of apostles, since the Hermas who was its author was not the man of that name mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, but the brother of Pope Pius. The Epistles to the Laodiceans and

¹ See Irenæus, *Adv. Hær.*, III. cc. 1-11; especially, c. 1 beginning, and c. 5 beginning. (The numbering refers to Harvey's ed.)

² *Clement of Rome*, vol. ii. pp. 405-13. For the fragment itself, see Westcott, *The Canon of the New Testament*, App. C. pp. 516-30, fourth edition

Alexandrians are rejected on the ground that they are falsely attributed to St. Paul. The public reading in the congregation is carefully guarded. Only writings of unquestioned authority are to be used for this purpose. Earlier than this, and probably later also, in less anxious times or in other Churches, the rule was much less strict. But a certain recognition was conferred by such use, and it was important to avoid all danger of confusion. Hence the *Shepherd of Hermas* might be privately read, but not published in the Church to the people among the prophets and apostles. In regard to another work, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which the writer receives, he acknowledges that some Christians will not have it publicly read.

Interesting convictions and views as to the inspiration and universal authority of the various writings are also expressed. In the Gospels, though they have different beginnings, all the main facts about our Lord are announced by one Spirit, Who is the common Source. Again, St. Paul, like St. John in the Apocalypse, writes to seven Churches, and the complete number shows that his Epistles are intended for the Universal Church. His Epistles to individuals are "sanctified in the honour of the Catholic Church," because of their purpose, the constitution and regulation of the Church.

As we have already implied, the position of some writings in regard to the canon remained still unsettled at this period. The history of the differences of view respecting the most important of these illustrates the same principles which we have already noticed. Thus the Epistle to the Hebrews is passed over in silence in the Muratorian Canon, and for a long time was not quoted as Scripture among the Latins, the reason probably being that they (rightly) did not regard it as by St. Paul. On the other hand, the Alexandrine Church was more deeply impressed with its inspiration. Hence Clement and Origen insisted on its apostolicity in a secondary sense, as being by one who had companied with St. Paul, and as full of his thoughts. More and more its reception as Scripture reacted upon the common view of its authorship, causing it to be accepted as by St. Paul. On the other hand, there arose in some quarters, after the second century, a reaction against the Apocalypse of St. John, because it had been used to support Millenarianism. And those who for this reason disliked it called in question its authenticity.

These are but instances. It is not our purpose to follow out the history of the formation of the canon in detail. And so far as the method by which agreement was arrived at is concerned, we would reserve

what we have to say for the next section. The two points which it has been our object thus far to bring out are that the note of apostolicity chiefly determined the selection of the writings which were accepted as authoritative; while the exercise of spiritual perception, during a period of some duration was necessary in order to form an established, and in any sense adequate, conception of their inspiration.

But the Church of the time of Irenæus and Tertulian felt that she had another treasure to guard besides her Scriptures. The Gospel ^{(β) Apostolic tradition.} was first delivered, not in written records, but through preaching and catechetical instruction. And even after the apostolic age, the memory of the living voice of the apostles and other disciples of the Lord and their immediate followers—the substance and manner of their teaching, and some of their very words—remained as a witness to the truth independent of, and of scarcely inferior authority to, their writings. As the sense of the inspiration of these writings and the conception of the New Testament canon grew in distinctness, and as the value of the superior guarantees afforded by written documents, both actually increased with the lapse of time, and became more apparent, the general Church tradition

as to the apostolic teaching assumed less importance. But it still had, and was emphatically recognized as having, a value of its own. The controversy with Gnosticism illustrated this in a signal manner, and the great writers against Gnosticism of the close of the second and beginning of the third centuries point the moral. The Gnostic teachers, and notably the Valentinians, the most influential school of all, were ready to apply to the sayings and parables of the Lord, and to the language of the apostles, the allegorical method of interpretation, which had already been employed to some extent by Christians in the interpretation of the Old Testament, and which had been in vogue among Jews and heathen before it was adopted among Christians, as a means of removing the difficulties, and heightening the apparent value, of their respective sacred and ancient writings. So long as this mode of treatment was confined to the Old Testament, and the New was understood according to its plain meaning, the latter afforded a check upon licence in interpreting the former. But when the New Testament, also, was supposed to be full of hidden meanings, there was but one way of preventing each individual teacher from reading his own notions into the Scriptures, and drawing support for them thence. This was by an appeal to the Church's

sense as to the meaning of the language of the apostles, and the knowledge which she claimed to have preserved of their teaching. The outline of this was offered more particularly in the Creed;¹ the very same which, with some supplementary clauses became, and continues to this day, the baptismal creed of Western Christendom, and which with somewhat more amplification sufficed to define the position of the Church in regard to the great doctrinal controversies of the fourth century.

At the close of the second century, as we have said, this simple formula was found to be of great importance as a safeguard against a perverted view of the Christian revelation. This age of the Church was critical and formative in the history of the conception of Church authority, as in so many other respects.

But it may be thought that now, at all events, since sounder ideas of exegesis have become prevalent, the guide to, and check upon the interpretation of Scripture afforded by such a formula as we have been chiefly considering, and by other formularies and methods by which the Church teaches, are no longer required, however useful all these may still be as

¹ The chief passages on the subject have become *loci classici*; but I may, for convenience, give the references again:—Iren., *Hær.*, i. 10; iii. 4. Tertull., *De Præscrip. Hæret.*, 12, 13; *De Virg. Vel.*, 1; *Adv. Præx.*, 2.

furnishing convenient means of Christian instruction, or tests of Church membership. There is some truth in this. The comparison of Scripture with Scripture, the habit of entering into the aim and circumstances of the writers, and all the various resources of scholarship, may effect much. Yet even the devout and fully equipped student may, with all these aids, fail to obtain a justly proportioned conception of Divine revelation as a whole. Still more must this be the case with the majority of mankind who have not the knowledge, or skill, to employ such means. Experience gives us abundant reason for thinking that some corrective is, and will continue to be, needed for the habit of fixing too much attention upon isolated texts, and forcing even upon these a meaning which they will not bear, under the influence of partial views of the Christian faith.

We must go further. It is at least conceivable, that the representation of Divine revelation left in the written records may be positively incomplete, without the tradition of the oral teaching. The apostolic writings were for the most part called forth by special occasions. The Epistles addressed to different Churches presupposed the instruction in the elements of the faith which had already been given, and dealt with particular questions of doctrine and practice

as circumstances might require. It is necessary to remember this before drawing any inference from the proportionate amounts in which different topics are dwelt upon in the New Testament. For example, it has sometimes been argued that because little space, comparatively speaking, is devoted to the subject of the Sacraments in the Epistles, they were, therefore, held to be unimportant. The fallaciousness of this reasoning becomes apparent when we recall the purpose with which different Epistles were written, and the instruction which the converts had independently received.

Similar considerations turn the point of the objection which has been urged from another quarter, that the silence of the Epistles in regard to the miracles of our Lord, and other incidents of His life, casts doubt upon their truth. The fact was, doubtless, that the apostles and other evangelists had again and again gone over the main facts of, and many illustrative narratives from, the Lord's life, with those to whom the Epistles were addressed.

To this extent, then, there may clearly be justification for the view, that in order to obtain a full and correct impression of the teaching of the apostles, we must combine the tradition of it embodied in the practice and doctrine of the early Church with the

New Testament. Nevertheless, when we consider the precariousness of all tradition, we shall feel that even that to which the Church of the second century bears testimony cannot be relied upon, except in so far as it can be shown to be fully in harmony, and to fit in, with that of the written records. The tradition may save us from overlooking the true significance of passages which in the New Testament are exceptional, and from thinking that points which are there treated but rarely, were not included among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. It may draw our attention to hints and allusions which we should otherwise have overlooked, or show us that facts which are not mentioned are nevertheless presupposed. But if the New Testament did not, *when thus illuminated*, give support to the tradition, we could not trust the latter.

Again, in regard to any points in which the belief and practice of the Church at the earliest epoch at which we have fairly full light thrown upon Christian thought and life, that is, at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries, does not support the belief and practice of later ages, the latter can have no authority simply as *tradition*. They may still be of the highest importance as drawing out more fully the meaning and content of Christian truth; but it

cannot be claimed for them in that case that they are historical witnesses to the actual forms of the teaching of the apostles; for it is most improbable that any portion of the memory of this in the Church, which shows no traces of itself at the time to which we have referred, should subsequently have emerged to light. In saying this, we do not forget the *Disciplina Arcani* in the ancient Church, that is the custom of withholding certain doctrinal teaching even from catechumens till just before baptism, as well as of excluding them from presence at the most sacred rites. For in the first place, this *Disciplina* does not seem to have begun to grow before the end of the second century. Tertullian is the first writer who makes any mention of it, and his allusions¹ appear to refer more particularly to presence at the Sacred Mysteries *par excellence*, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which may probably from the first have been jealously guarded from the intrusion of unbelievers and of the unprepared. There is nothing to show that in his time it extended to what was taught. In after times, the Creed was a sacred deposit committed orally to

¹ *Apol.*, ch. vii.; *De Præscrip.*, ch. xli. Compare Bingham, *Antiquities*, Book x. ch. v., on the whole subject, his treatment of which is excellent. I need only observe that he concedes somewhat more than necessary with respect to the *Disciplina* in Tertullian's time. The words, "pariter audiunt," which he read in *De Præscrip.*, ch. xli., appear not to belong to the true text.

those about to be baptized, and "to be written not on parchments, but in memory on the heart."¹ But the fact that Tertullian himself gives the Creed in writings against heretics proves that with respect to it at least the habit of secrecy did not then exist. It is true he paraphrases it; but this does not affect the present argument, more especially as the paraphrases are close.²

When in later times the practice of reserve had become established, preachers speak vaguely in their public sermons on the points of doctrine which were not to be explained to catechumens, heathen, and Jews, yet in terms which the faithful could understand. And we, too, can understand them. It cannot be pretended that, taking the literature of the times as a whole, we are not able to judge what the doctrine of the Fathers, and of the Church of their age, upon these points was.

These reflections have been suggested to us in connexion with the part played by tradition at the close of the second century, in the hands of such men as Irenæus and Tertullian. The principle of Church authority receives further and very striking illustra-

¹ S. Cyr., *Hier. Catech.*, v. § 12.

² I cannot, therefore, agree with Dr. Lumby (*History of Creeds*, pp. 2-4) that the *Disciplina Arcani* explains the absence of early traces of the Creed. The first indication of its application to the Creed appears to be in Cyprian, *Testim.*, iii. 50, and that is not unambiguous.

tion from its influence upon the great Alexandrian school, which we connect especially with the names of Clement and Origen. They, like the Gnostics—particularly the Alexandrian Gnostics—revelled in allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, and applied it to the New Testament as well as the Old. But, unlike them, they were restrained by reverence for the received faith of the Church. It will suffice to take an example from Origen. He begins his treatise, *De Principiis*, with an enumeration of the articles of faith which are already agreed upon in the Church. He does not dream of calling these in question, he bows to them as loyally and gladly as the simplest believer could. But they leave open many questions, through the study of which the devout inquirer may hope to find a reward for his own mind and heart, and to advance the knowledge of the truth. Just as the investigator in every branch of science at the present time acquaints himself with what has already been done in order to see in what directions scope is left him to make further discoveries, so does Origen stake out, as it were, the course which inquiry may most profitably take, by the help of a review of the points already ascertained. This great thinker, the man, perhaps, of greatest intellectual grasp and penetration among all Christian theologians, is, in the

general attitude of his mind, the very type of the true combination of reverence for authority with the active spirit of inquiry and courageous facing of difficulties. He surveyed the whole field of theology, and anticipated the consideration of many questions which were to occupy the mind of the Church at large in the coming centuries. On all these he thought to good purpose, and materially advanced clearness of conception and knowledge. On some points he was erratic, or even fell into positive error; but we can hardly doubt that if he had lived in a later age, after the consequences of various dangerous tendencies had become more apparent, he would have profited by and submitted loyally to all the well-ascertained results of the Church's longer and fuller experience.

The case of Origen, however, brings the question of the Church's authority before us in connection with another principle, distinct from that of the simple remembrance of the apostolic rule—the principle of the development of doctrine. Such a development is traceable within the New Testament itself. We may plainly observe both variety of types of doctrine and an expansion of Christian thought in the several writings of which it is composed. Partly through their own inner, spiritual experience, partly through their outward experience, the teach-

γ The development of doctrine.

ing of circumstances, the exigencies of their missionary work, and the greater fulness of statement and sharpness of definition which were required when truth was brought into conflict with error, the apostles entered more deeply into the meaning of words of the Lord, and perceived continually more and more the significance of the great fact of His incarnation, and of the manner of His life and death and resurrection, in relation to the whole realm of thought, to their views of God and His counsels, and the world, and human duty and destiny. Now we believe that there is a certain completeness in the New Testament even from this point of view. All the main aspects of the revelation are there set forth. Still we cannot arbitrarily say, when we have reached the boundary of the latest written book of the New Testament, "Hitherto we will allow genuine progress in the apprehension of the truth to have proceeded and no further."

The example of Origen in his treatise, *De Principiis*, to which we have just referred, strikingly illustrates the way in which old truths might be placed in new lights, as Christian thought was actively exercised upon the problems which were suggested when Christianity was placed amid new surroundings, and also how the need might be felt for

authoritative decisions on some at least of the issues that were thus raised. Among the articles of the Church's faith enumerated by Origen, we have not only such as are included in the Apostles' Creed, but also some the clear assertion of which was due to the conflict of Christianity with alien systems of thought. As an instance, I may give the doctrine of human responsibility, on which the Greek Church in particular learned to insist through opposition both to the current heathen conceptions of fate, and the doctrine of necessity taught in the philosophic schools.¹

The period, however, which was to be *par excellence* that of development through doctrinal definition was not to open till some seventy years after the death of Origen. To that period more especially belongs the introduction of new clauses into the Baptismal Creed, to express truths virtually contained all along in the faith of Christians, but often vaguely conceived, and the formal embodiment of which had been rendered necessary by new circumstances. This process must, indeed, have begun in some measure even before the close of the third century. The Creed offered to the Council of Nicæa by Eusebius of Cæsarea, as that which he had received at his baptism and which he had taught both as presbyter and bishop, and again

¹ See Note E, "Extracts from Origen, *De Principiis*."

the Creed remembered as that of Lucian of Antioch, which played an important part in the controversies of the fourth century, are examples of such pre-Nicene enlargements. Doubtless they were called forth by the heresies of Paul of Samosata and Sabellius, and other similar heresies of the time. Individual teachers found it advisable to guard against these by impressing certain phrases upon their hearers; and sometimes such phrases came to be sanctioned by the usage of particular churches. This we may conjecture; it is not necessary, however, in our brief review, to linger over this comparatively obscure period. Whatever powers were displayed then, were included among those put forth in the age of the great early Councils, where we possess much fuller information.

Upon the manner in which—the machinery, so to speak, whereby—the final results were reached, we shall have to make some remarks under the next division of our subject. For the present we are concerned only with the general character of the work which had to be done. A more original and active exercise of the mind of the Church than before was now called for. She was no longer simply required to hand on faithfully the form of words which she had received from of old, but by seizing upon the appropriate words from Holy Scripture, and even by

the employment of words not in Scripture, to state anew in a way suited to the needs of a fresh generation what the Christian faith is.

She believed herself to be still, in so doing, a witness to the faith delivered from the beginning. And the testimony of those who were present at the Councils that the formularies which they accepted expressed the ancient faith of the Church, was of decisive value in sanctioning those formularies. Thus, at Nicæa, the formula by which the new definition of the faith was referred to clearly showed the conviction of the Council that they were not innovating;¹ and throughout the controversy which followed, it was the contention of those who adhered to the Nicene symbol, that no article of faith had been introduced. And this was essentially true. Nevertheless, the very employment of new words, or even new combinations of words, implied, to a certain extent, new ideas; for no two words or phrases are

¹ Athanasius notices the difference between the formula used in a mere question of discipline, the settlement of the Paschal question, and the exposition of the faith. *Περὶ μὲν τοῦ Πάσχα, ἔδοξε τὰ ὑποτεταγμένα· τότε γὰρ ἔδοξε πάντας πείθεσθαι· περὶ δὲ τῆς πίστεως ἔγραψαν, οὐκ, ἔδοξεν, ἀλλ' οὕτως πιστεύει ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία. Καὶ εὐθὺς ὡμολόγησαν, πῶς πιστεύουσιν, ἵνα δείξωσιν ὅτι μὴ νεώτερον, ἀλλ' ἀποστολικόν ἐστιν αὐτῶν τὸ φρόνημα, καὶ ᾧ ἔγραψαν, οὐκ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐδρέθη, ἀλλὰ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἅπερ ἐδίδαξαν οἱ ἀπόστολοι. *De Synodis*, § v. Cf. *De Decretis*, § v. References might easily be multiplied.*

strictly synonymous. A development had taken place; part of what before was implicit was now rendered explicit; new emphasis was laid on certain aspects; the faith as a whole had a complexion differing somewhat from that which had obtained before. The large amount of resistance, arising mainly from conservative feeling, which the new definitions met with, is in itself sufficient evidence of this.

There is in many minds a strong aversion to that dogmatic language on mysterious subjects, the most important examples of which we are considering. Part of this dislike should disappear when the terms are properly understood, as they will be when the mind has become penetrated with the thoughts of the great masters of theology who first employed them, and has learned to appreciate their metaphysical genius and spiritual temper. Yet, even when all this has been allowed for, there will remain a natural and right fear of too much precision of language on matters which are beyond the grasp of the human mind, and where there may be danger that the exercise of the logical intellect, even so far as it can have play, may interfere with that awe and adoration which are our only befitting attitude of soul. Nevertheless, such questions as those about

which the Church was occupied in the fourth and fifth centuries could not fail at one time or another to require an answer, so far as one could be given, and the dangers involved in framing it had to be faced. Truths, at first sight contradictory, had been revealed to the faith of Christians—the unity of God, and, at the same time, the true Godhead of the Son and the Spirit, as well as the Father, and the distinct subsistency of all three; again, the perfect humanity, as well as the true Divinity, of Jesus Christ. It was inevitable that when men accustomed to reason came under the power of the Gospel, the speculative intellect should be unable to rest without finding at least an indication of a possible solution of the apparent contradictions. It was a point of still greater importance, that in the case of truths thus seemingly opposed, there was constant danger that one might be so held as to impair the other. This was, in fact, the character of all the heresies which arose. It was necessary, then, so clearly to lay down the faith of the Church in regard to the companion-truths, that each might be preserved.

In forming the doctrinal conceptions which we have been considering, the mind of the Church was, so to speak, fully alive, and the results reached were of a perfectly definite kind. We might describe these

as *conscious* developments, meaning, thereby, not that those who worked them out and accepted them were always conscious of the difference in their habits of thought and state of knowledge before and after the process had been performed, but that the development itself was a reasoned development, one effected through the conscious employment of the intellectual powers.

On the other hand, there is a class of *unconscious* developments, which are not by any means necessarily to be rejected because they were in the first instance unconscious, though they may need conscious sifting and testing before they can be regarded as trustworthy. The meaning and power of Christianity, at first partly latent, and the unfolding of which will not to the end of time, we believe, be completed, are exhibited in the growing experiences of its life, under the varying circumstances of different regions into which it makes its way, and races and ages that receive its impress. Fresh applications are made of its great principles. Its motives, its great underlying thoughts and aspirations, its ethical temper, are embodied in customs of worship, in prayers, in institutions, in systems of ecclesiastical discipline, in conduct, in the attitude of Christians to the world around them. Moreover, doctrines not

before clearly apprehended, may be found to be implied in practices to the adoption of which Christian experiences and feeling have led, and may thus win acceptance. We are not considering to what extent other influences may mingle with genuine Christian ones in producing the forms of Christian life that have been and are actually seen in the world. We say only that these growths cannot be dismissed without examination. If we would know as fully as possible what Christianity is, we must take account of its apprehension by men, as shown not only in formal statements, but in practical results.

I need hardly say that this is the main idea from which Cardinal Newman starts in his famous essay on *The Development of Christian Doctrine*. And no fear of the inferences which he drew from it ought to deter us from acknowledging its general truth. I may refer my readers to the opening chapters of that essay for its further illustration.¹

When treating of *tradition*, in the strict sense of the term, we discussed its relation to Holy Scripture. The relation of *developments* of doctrine to Holy Scripture must in like manner be considered. In the great controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries concerning the Person of Christ and the Godhead, the

¹ See especially pp. 36, 37, 95, 96, 110, first edition.

appeal from both sides was constantly to Holy Scripture. In particular, Athanasius, and the other defenders of the Nicene Faith, urged Scripture in argument with opponents, and in their expositions of the faith to brother-bishops and to the Christian people.¹ The meaning which they put upon texts was often critically unsound. But this in nowise affects their recognition of the principle of establishing doctrine by Scripture. And in the case of the subjects then under discussion, there was abundance of sound Scriptural evidence, much of which was adduced, for the separate truths the import and relations of which had to be apprehended.

As the very notion of development implies, it cannot strictly be demanded that more than the premisses shall be proved from Scripture. These must be sought there, just because Christianity is a Divine revelation, and the authentic account of this revelation is therein contained. But we may expect also to find, and we do find, in Holy Scripture, not only the premisses, but also more or less clear indications of many, at least,

¹ On the use of Scripture by the Fathers, see, for instance, Newman, *Prophetical Office*, Lect. xiii.; also Gore's *Roman Catholic Claims*, pp. 60, ff. Another good example, not mentioned by these writers, is to be seen in Rufinus, *Commentarius Symb. Apost.*, § 18, in defending the clause then found in the Creed of Aquileia, but not in that of Rome, "*Descendit ad inferna.*"

of the more important conclusions that may be legitimately drawn from them. For as one who has a vivid hold of a great principle sees intuitively many of the applications that may be made of it, before occasions for making them have arisen, so, surely, did the inspired writers see what lay in the great truths to which they testified. And if this kind of confirmation cannot be absolutely demanded for all inferences that may be drawn from the foundation-truths of Christianity, yet there is reason to scrutinize with peculiar care any which cannot show it. For, in matters so much beyond the grasp of the human mind, as are most of those connected with religious truth, it has many grounds for distrusting its own reasonings.¹

A few remarks must be added on the sense in which the Church can be the interpreter of Holy Scripture. We have no ground for attributing to her any special capacity whereby the ordinary means and resources of criticism may be dispensed with. It is most improbable in

¹ There is nothing, I think, in this remark, inconsistent with the criticism on Dean Mansel, pp. 43-51 above. He tried to invalidate the judgments of the mind even on those points on which God Himself appeals to it, and he does so in the interest of theories, some of which are in reality not matters of revelation, but examples of illegitimate inferences, such as I have acknowledged the danger of.

itself, that God should have bestowed upon the Church supernatural powers which might supersede or come into conflict with the ordinary faculties of the human mind, in a field where the latter certainly have verdicts of their own to deliver. Perhaps the most astounding blunder ever made as to the province of Church authority in this respect was the decree of the Council of Trent that the Vulgate edition of the Scriptures was alone to be considered authentic.¹ Yet with the warning of this mistake before their eyes, there are some among ourselves who would support at least the general features of the *Textus Receptus* against more critical texts on the ground that it represents in the main the tradition of the Church. This is just the sort of matter on which tradition would be most unreliable. The Church is in no way furnished with means for guarding against the ordinary causes of the corruption of manuscripts. It cannot be shown to be, and is not, an organ suited for the ascertainment of this kind of truth, and has therefore no authority upon it. To claim authority for her in such a case is to weaken the idea of her authority in general, by suggesting that it may never have any better foundation.

¹ See Note F, "The alleged authority of the Church in regard to the text of Scripture."

Again, we cannot look to the collective mind of the Church to decide between different interpretations of a particular passage, which are equally consistent with the general teaching of Scripture. The impressions of the Christian people would be of little weight on such a point, and even a consensus of the Fathers would not be conclusive. The Fathers are of immense interest and value as interpreters of Scripture, not only because their comments often illustrate the history of doctrines, but also because their minds and hearts were frequently so penetrated with the principles of the Christian faith, that even when they must be held to be most unsound from the point of view of critical exegesis, they often give noble expression to truths of revelation which are too much overlooked in our generation. But it is to misuse them when they are invoked to maintain a meaning contradictory to grammar and context. It may even be questioned whether the widespread belief in, and employment of, the principle of mystical interpretation on the part of so many schools and in so many ages, suffice to justify it generally as a method for ascertaining what we are intended to learn from Scripture. The mystical sense has shown itself equally pliable to the Gnostic and the Apostolic Christian, to the most fanatical sectary, and the Catholic. It is

imperative, if we are to employ it at all, that we should be furnished with means of distinguishing between its use and abuse. But even the great Church teachers who constantly resort to it, show so little consciousness of this, that we cannot attach great weight to their authority in the matter.

"It may almost be laid down as a historical fact," Dr. Newman writes, "that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together."¹ In order to estimate the truth of this statement it would be necessary to know what definition he would give of "orthodoxy." If it be taken to mean the faith of the Catholic Creed, we believe it to be wholly unjustifiable, and in any case the remark is admirably calculated to undermine faith. We do not, however, admit that the only alternative to the mystical interpretation (as ordinarily understood and practised) is an exegesis which takes "not the scope of a Divine intelligence, but the intention of the mere human organ of inspiration as the real sense of Scripture."² It is, indeed, precisely in her power of saving us from such a narrow view of its meaning, and enabling us

¹ *Essay on Development*, p. 324.

² *Ibid.*, p. 285. Dr. Newman thus describes the exegetical principles of Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Syrian school. He does not say that this is the only alternative to the mystical interpretation, but he implies it.

to enter more truly into "the scope of a Divine intelligence" therein, that—unless we are much mistaken—the Church's function in regard to the interpretation of Scripture properly consists. We believe that she sets before us a worthier conception of the whole system of Divine truth in its true proportions, than we could obtain without her; that she has sketched it in her formularies and reflects it still more fully in her manifold life. She guards us against the errors that arise from dwelling in an exclusive spirit upon one or two truths. She impresses upon us also the unity of the Divine plan, and thus teaches us to trace, without arbitrariness, anticipations in the Law and the Prophets of a fuller revelation, and to discern even in some of the utterances of apostles a significance which they could not themselves measure adequately.

We are now in a position to consider the issues raised by the doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the authority of tradition. The controversy on the subject no longer excites the interest that once it did, but is still not without importance. The first point to be noticed is that under tradition, as it has been and is even to this day understood in the Roman Church, the results have been indiscriminately combined of the exercise of the two functions of the

Church which we have seen are to be clearly distinguished, on the one hand, the preservation in her memory of the rule of apostolical teaching, on the other, her active thought upon new problems, and the practices and doctrines which arise with the progress of life.

The Council of Trent claimed for the whole class of "unwritten traditions" that they were "received from the mouth of Christ Himself by the apostles, or from the apostles themselves at the dictation of the Holy Ghost," and "have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand." These traditions supplied, along with Holy Scripture, the rule for Christian faith and conduct. They were undoubtedly understood, and meant by the Council to include—as we may say without hesitation, in view of all its language and the controversies of the time—a multitude of decrees of the Church, which at all events had not come down in their actual shape from the apostles, and of beliefs and practices, no traces of which remain in the records of primitive times. Eminent Roman controversialists endeavoured to meet the historical difficulties of the position by attributing the silence of documents to the *Disciplina Arcani* of the ancient Church.¹ We have seen how little

¹ See names of Roman writers at beginning of passage of Bingham referred to above, p. 125.

this argument will avail even for the first few centuries; and it could have no point in regard to those practices and doctrines which did not begin till some time after it had ceased. This claim on behalf of the traditions of the Mediæval Church closely resembles that made by the Jewish rabbis for their traditions—namely, that they had been received by Moses on Mount Sinai, and delivered by him to be orally handed on at the same time that he published openly to all the people the Law which was committed to writing. The claim was equally unfounded in the one case and in the other.

We must take into account the extent of the mass of traditions which were imposed as authoritative, and the variety of their character and of the sources whence they came, and we must view the subject in its connexion with the whole question of authority in regard to human knowledge in general which was agitating the minds of men in the sixteenth century, if we would realize the critical nature of the controversy on the subject of tradition, and do justice to the attitude of even extreme Protestants.¹

In order to form some idea of the dominion of authority in the Middle Ages, under its best aspect,

¹ See Note G, "Controversies concerning Tradition at the Reformation Era.

let the reader turn to the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, and, if he has never done so before, read at least two or three sections, so as to familiarize himself with the method pursued. On each question that is successively propounded, the opposite views that may be taken, and the authorities which seem to support them, are stated, and a solution is sought of the difficulty created by their divergence. The whole work is the most marvellous monument that could well be conceived of comprehensive system, of clearness of arrangement and divisions, of intellectual thoroughness, of piercing insight into the real difficulties of a subject, and of *consistency* of thought. But the point to which I desire now to call attention is the conception of the basis for reasoning which underlies the whole. The premisses are drawn from Holy Scripture, from the writings of the Fathers, and from "the philosopher," that is, Aristotle. The validity of these premisses is not discussed; apparently any sentence of any Father is an authority which is not to be questioned. It remains only that the authorities should be harmonized; consistency is the one end. And the extent to which this end is attained is a striking proof both that diversities between sincere thinkers do not in general amount to real contradictions, but arise from their having seized upon different

aspects of a truth which is essentially one, and also in particular it is an evidence of the unity of Christian spirit which pervades the Patristic literature. Still, such a notion of authority was not unnaturally becoming intolerable to many minds in the latter part of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. By the time of the Council of Trent, the conception of it differed probably from that of the Scholastic Age proper, even within the Roman Church herself; for she could not remain altogether unaffected by the general change of temper and opinion. In some respects it was becoming more restricted; on the other hand, some new doctrines and practices had been admitted into the body of authoritative tradition.

It was this heterogeneous mass which was offered to men as affording, along with Holy Scripture, a rule of faith. The Church of Rome herself had not verified its contents, and did not show any readiness to draw about it a circumscribing line. Can we wonder that many should have wholly rejected this source of spiritual knowledge, and in reaction from the exaggerated pretensions of the Church should have claimed the right to interpret Scripture by the light of the individual judgment alone? On the other hand, the Article of the English Church on the subject (No. 20) contents itself with laying down that agreement with

Holy Scripture must be the test of all that may be legitimately imposed as *de fide*. And though it evades the question who is to be the judge of this agreement, its main purport seems to be to declare what is to guide the Church in her decrees. It is true that if our thought is to be clear, it must be decided how far the individual is to be left to form an estimate of the manner in which the Church has performed her work, and how far the Church herself must be her own judge. Yet the principle that harmony with Scripture is necessary to guarantee the apostolicity of the most venerable traditions, and that there must be constant appeal to Scripture in framing definitions of the faith, is in itself a most important one, and, as we have seen, justly insisted on. And it is possible to judge broadly whether there has been adequate recognition of the principle in general, apart altogether from questions of the interpretation of Scripture. We may fairly ask, for instance, whether the minds of those through whom the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility were defined, were evidently impregnated with Holy Scripture in the way that the minds of the Nicene Fathers were. If the twentieth of the Thirty-nine Articles may be justly charged with ambiguity as to the manner in which the test is to be applied,

the decree of the Council of Trent is at best ambiguous as to the necessity of its employment at all.¹ Indeed, the natural sense of the words seems rather to make Scripture and tradition strictly *co-ordinate* authorities. The Synod declares that the truth and discipline which was delivered by our Lord to His apostles, or taught them by the Holy Ghost, are contained "in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus," "written books and unwritten traditions;" and that "following the example of the orthodox Fathers, she receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence, all the books of the Old and of the New Testament—seeing that one God is the Author of both—as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either from Christ's very mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession."² If this language does not

¹ Mr. W. Palmer contends that "the doctrine of the Church of England (viz. that Holy Scripture 'contains all things necessary to salvation') is more conformable to the decree of the Council of Trent, than is the opposite opinion." See his *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 14, first edition, 1838.—Mr. Gore, who also refers to Mr. Palmer's opinion, takes precisely the same view as I do of the language of the Tridentine decree. See *Roman Catholic Claims*, p. 59.

² See the "Decree concerning the Canonical Scriptures," of the Council of Trent, Fourth Session, held April 8, 1546. The following

expressly state that Church tradition contains articles of faith or rules of life, delivered by the apostles, and essential to salvation, which are *additional* to those to be found in Holy Scripture, it seems undoubtedly to suggest it. And this view has been plainly taught by writers of position in the Roman Church.¹

The argument based on the *Disciplina Arcani* by Roman controversialists of the sixteenth century has been noticed above. Others, even of that time, indicated the principle of development as a means of defending the later Roman Creed, and this application of it received copious illustration at the hands of Dr. Newman in his famous essay. He contends that a living infallible authority, which can practically be obtained only through acknowledging the Pope's supremacy, is necessary to decide upon the genuineness or falsity of the developments of Christianity,

words from the Creed of Pius IV.—the “profession of the Tridentine Faith,” which was the outcome of the Council—should also be noted. They follow the recitation of the “Nicene” Creed. “Apostolicas et ecclesiasticas traditiones, reliquasque ejusdem Ecclesiæ observationes et constitutiones firmissime admitto, et amplector. Item sacram Scripturam juxta eum sensum quem tenuit et tenet sancta mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu, et interpretatione sacrarum Scripturarum, admitto; nec eam unquam nisi juxta unanimum consensum Patrum accipiam, et interpretabor.”

¹ See Note H, “Opinions of Roman Catholic divines on the relation of Scripture and Tradition.”

which could not but arise if it was to be a living force in the world's history.

It is not his design in the seven tests of a true development, the description and illustration of which occupies nearly the whole book, to supersede the function of the holy Father acting with or without a General Council, as he may think fit, nor to analyze the process by which the Pope, or even a General Council, arrives at the truth. The tests, though we may question whether they ought to be called such, are not in any case calculated to do more than to create a general impression, as it were from a comprehensive glance, that the Roman doctrines and practices are *true* developments, and so to raise a presumption in favour of the Roman Church. It is not my intention to detail and criticize these tests. Those who cannot afford time to read the essay itself, may see them summarized in Mr. R. H. Hutton's recently published study of Cardinal Newman.¹ I desire to remark only on the extreme looseness of the tests. The marks of the Roman Church of the present time, which he compares with those of the Church of earlier ages, are of the most external kind. Even in such a test as that of "continuity of principles," the principles which he notes are so general as to admit

¹ Pages 166-185.

of the most varied and contrary applications. Much closer reasoning than any which he employs is necessary even for the purpose of raising a legitimate presumption. Moreover, it does not seem that any theory of development, such as Newman's, answers the requirements of the language of the Vatican Council.¹

SECTION II.

The Validity of the Church's Teaching.

We have considered generally the nature of the functions which the Church may discharge as a declarer and deliverer of truth, the scope left for the exercise of such an office by the revelation made at the beginning and contained in Sacred Writings. We must now examine more closely the process by which she preserves and ascertains truth, and the guarantees, if such exist, for the soundness of her

¹ Mr. R. H. Hutton, *ibid.*, p. 163, writes, indeed, "The essay on *Development* has, so far as I can hear, been adopted with enthusiasm by the most orthodox school in the Roman Catholic Church, and it is now usually regarded by Roman Catholics as one of the most powerful of modern apologies for their specific theological doctrines." But see Professor Bright's remarks, *Lives of Three Great Fathers*, preface, pp. xviii. ff.

teaching. For it has seemed best to keep this question separate (as far as possible) from the former, even though we shall thus be compelled to take up some of the same instances a second time in order to look at them from a different point of view.

The Roman claim to an absolute authority. once met by the claim of the Church of Rome that she alone is able to *guarantee* truth, while it is urged in support of this that at all events she alone has shown, and shows, a power which is practically effective for settling controversies of faith, and of relieving her children from disagreements and perplexities. God having once given us a revelation, we must (it is said) suppose that He would not leave us in doubt as to its meaning. The famous rule of Vincent of Lerins—the “quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,” which has been offered as a key for discovering the real teaching of Christianity—is too difficult of application.¹ The needs of man (we are told) require some readier, surer guidance, such as can only be obtained in the one Church whose voice is perfectly firm and clear, and which is an active, effective, living authority, able to deal with new questions as they arise, the Church in which the simple test of truth is agreement with the

¹ Cf. Newman, *Development*, pp. 7, ff.

chair of St. Peter.¹ Now there is something essentially precarious in an argument of this kind. As Bishop Butler urged with so much effect in a parallel case, we are not in a position to judge what course God would think fit to pursue in communicating Divine knowledge to man—how much He might be expected to tell us, and when and by what means He would choose to speak. Hence, 'however clear and constraining the *à priori* argument for the Roman claims might seem to be, it would behove us to test carefully by more direct methods the validity of the conclusions obtained. We should inquire, for example, whether the Church during earlier centuries held the same views as to the methods by which Divine truth was to be ascertained, as those now and in recent times prevailing in the Roman Communion; and again, whether the history of the Papacy is such as to justify the belief that either it, or the Church so long as she maintains full communion with it, are infallible.

The discussion of the topics just mentioned, which have been ably treated by many, does not fall within the plan of this essay. But it is necessary that I should make some remarks upon the conception itself of authority in matters of belief which Rome exemplifies.

¹ See Note I, "Grounds on which the Infallibility of Rome is believed in."

Now, it should be observed that the authority of the supposed infallible interpreter of the Christian revelation can at least only be acknowledged by those who have accepted the revelation. His voice can therefore avail only for deciding points upon which believers in Christianity differ, or might be inclined to differ; it cannot settle the question of belief or disbelief in Christianity itself. For we must already believe in a God who is Righteousness and Love, and whose Will it is to make Himself known to His creatures, and in the main facts of the Christian revelation, and in the existence of the Church of Christ as a Divine institution, before the probabilities as to the provision of infallible guidance can come into consideration at all. That such provision has been made is credible, only if it can be regarded as a consequence of the whole scheme, of the truth of which in general we must first have become assured. Even if we were to grant that the existence of a Church making the Roman claims, and winning the obedience she does, renders the scheme of redemption more complete, and therefore more probable, this consideration could only in the first instance enter as one among the arguments commending the revelation. It would need testing like the rest, and must be supported by the others. Thus the infallible guide cannot remove the doubts

which most exercise men's minds at the present time, and which are the most difficult to resolve, as to the foundations of the Christian faith. It could be known as infallible only when we had come to form or to examine the superstructure. To change the image: it is as though a traveller who had safely found his way through a wild and sparsely peopled continent by studying his map and the stars and the general conformation of the country, and by making inquiries from any inhabitants whom he has chanced to meet, should at length be told when he has reached a well-cultivated estate, where there are good roads, and where he can never go far without finding a human dwelling, that he will inevitably go astray and perish, unless he is personally conducted on his walks through it.

Undoubtedly many minds have found a refuge in the Roman Communion from unbelief. They have done so mainly because they have found encouragement and assistance in shutting their eyes to difficulties from a system in which that habit of mind is encouraged and the contrary habit of unquestioning obedience inculcated. As individuals they have doubtless often been gainers; though even on the same individuals a nemesis has sometimes afterwards come for evading the responsibilities which their own

conscience and intellect imposed. But what I am urging is that in the nature of things no *valid* reason for believing the primary articles of the Christian faith can be found in the tenet of infallibility, the proof of which can on the most favourable supposition only form part of the proof of those primary articles. And this being the case, a great part of the value which the tenet, through confusion of thought, is often supposed to have, must disappear. I have indeed maintained in former chapters that there is an authority which does and should enter largely into the grounds for belief, an authority distinct from that which the truths themselves should directly exercise over the mind and conscience. It is the authority of the testimony to spiritual facts of multitudes who in greater or less degree acknowledge their reality, and more especially of men and women whose lives have exhibited exceptional moral power and saintliness. And the Church is able to embody and present this testimony in a peculiarly impressive manner. This, however, is an authority the force of which may be admitted on general principles. It does not, like the doctrine of Papal infallibility, require specific proof.¹ We would here pass to another consideration.

¹ Bishop McLaren, of Illinois, in his *Catholic Dogma the Antidote of Doubt*, published by James Pott & Co., New York, hardly faces

If it should be found that the only authority which can be legitimately alleged for settling controversies of faith between those who are already Christian believers is one which does not altogether supersede the use of reason, if its competency to decide each subject on which it is invoked has to be examined, if there is a certain incompleteness about it, so that its deliverances are much more clear on some points than on others, and that it is sometimes silent when we might wish it to speak, this is in accordance with the analogy of the authority which helps us in the first instance to believe. Our probation in regard to matters of faith will not consist only in the process by which we choose or refuse an infallible guide, and then, after the guide has been chosen, cease for ever. It will continue so long as there is possibility of progress in faith and spiritual knowledge.

adequately the logical difficulties which the very title of his little book suggests. But the use which he makes of authority to combat doubt, is on the whole, I think, of that fully permissible kind indicated above. This book only came to my knowledge when my essay was already in the printer's hands. It takes up substantially the same position as mine in regard to the extent and basis of the Church's authority. Some portion, at least, of its argument should have force even for those who do not approach the subject from the Bishop's point of view. But in the main the value of the book seems to me to be that it will help those who already virtually believe, or who are prepared to believe, in the authority of the Church, to gain a more vivid and truer conception of it.

In yet another way the Roman theory of authority violates analogy. It substitutes the utterances of a mechanical oracle for the voice of the whole body of Christ. Even in the inspiration of apostles and prophets, we can find no parallel whereby to explain that of the Pope. In their case we may form at least some dim conception of the way in which the human organ received Divine illumination. They themselves give us glimpses into the working of their minds under its influence. But no theory, so far as I am aware, has ever been offered of the mode in which the representative of St. Peter knows infallibly the truth which remains uncertain to other men.

Lastly, under the elder dispensation, there were long periods in which there was no prophet, and yet some of these were times when there was deep and widespread yearning that one might arise, showing how great the need of spiritual instruction was felt to be. This must finally dispose of the idea that because God has once given a revelation He must therefore provide an oracle which can always be consulted to remove every doubt that may be felt respecting its meaning.

But although there exists no authority in matters of religious faith, which is equipped at all points, ever alert and ever unfaltering,

The Church's
true authority

after the manner of the Roman theory, and at the same time really to be trusted, there assuredly is a "prophetical office of the Church." There is an inheritance of authoritative belief which has been preserved to us, and which is to this day rendered available for us, because the Christian Society is a fact, because there has been and is in Christendom an organized life. There are habits of thought, and of social, as well as personal, action, which have been created by the embodiment of the grace and truth of Christ among mankind, and some of which, to say the least, are so ancient, and have been so widespread, that for any professing Christians to break away from them shows strange self-will.

There is a conception of the mission and work of the Incarnate Son, which we cannot but regard as derived in the main, at least, from those who held intimate converse with the apostles, and which, therefore, serves to illuminate their writings. There are doctrines which have been formulated to protect genuine Christian faith from the inroads of alien principles. The results have been attained in different ways, and are of varying degrees of definiteness. The guarantees, also, of their accuracy are not of uniform strength. In some cases the process of definition has been such and has been so tested that we have as

good ground for trusting its validity as that of the reasoning by which any other of the many truths to which strictly demonstrative proof is not applicable are established. It is no small gain if only the treasures and the fruit of the achievements of the past are placed in our hands and made a real possession for us. And we see no sufficient reason for surrendering the hope that the Christian Society as such may yet do more work of the same kind as it has done in the past—the work which is possible for it, and not for individuals or sects, in promoting progress in the apprehension of the Christian faith, and in further securing all true acquisitions made.

We recur to the instances which we took in
 Instances: considering what kind of function the
 The sound-
 ness and value
 of her work as
 a witness and
 keeper of
 Holy Writ. Church might conceivably discharge in
 regard to the ascertainment of truth. The
 question now is as to the actual soundness
 of the work she did. Speaking broadly, we receive
 the writings of the New Testament as the genuine
 work of apostles, or their immediate companions,—
 and, therefore, as supplying us with reliable historical
 evidence of the words and deeds of our Lord, and of
 the mind of those who were chosen by Him to be His
 representatives, and inspired by a peculiarly direct

knowledge of Him, as well as a special illumination,—on the faith of the witness of the Church of the last quarter of the second century.¹ The position in which we find the greater part, at least, of the New Testament at that epoch is an essential point in the argument for their authenticity. They are the sacred writings of a great society, which traced its own life back through a period of not more than three or four generations, or even two fairly long over-lapping memories, to the apostles of the Lord. It is well-nigh impossible that they could have attained such a position, if they had not emanated from the source from which they professed to emanate.

“The strength of negative criticism,” it has been well said, “lies in ignoring the existence of a Christian society in the apostolic age, strong in discipline,

¹ I do not forget that to complete the work of forming the canon of the New Testament, the interchange of the testimony and convictions of different Churches during the third and fourth centuries, and the confirmation given by Councils like the small gathering at Laodicea (circ. 363 A.D., see Westcott, *Hist. of Canon*, fifth edition, p. 432), and the Third of Carthage, A.D. 397, were needed. It is a remarkable fact that the Church was able to pass through the bitter conflicts which took place over the Nicene definitions, without there having been, and without making, any synodical decree concerning the canon, though appeals both to the Old and New Testaments were being made from all sides. All parties were sufficiently agreed as to what they meant by the Scriptures.

clear in faith, and jealous of innovation.”¹ This, at least, is our contention. We maintain that a comprehensive, thorough, and appreciative review of the evidence as to the early history of Christianity shows that in the various regions of the world where Christianity was planted, continuity of Church organization and government secured continuity of doctrine, and faithfulness of tradition in respect to so important a matter as the written documents of the faith; while a deep and true sense of unity and effective intercommunion between the Churches of different localities would check the introduction among these standards of the faith in one region of any claimant whose title was held in other places to be unsound or defective, thus further securing the soundness of the common belief. To these very guarantees of truth, Irenæus and Tertullian—to name only the two most prominent witnesses—are wont to appeal.

At the same time, the absence of perfect unity and intercommunication may, as Bishop Westcott suggests,² help to account for such differences in the canon of different Churches as for a time continued.

¹ Bishop Westcott on *The History of the Canon of the New Testament*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

And so as to the testimony of the Church of that age to the spirit and main outlines of the teaching of the apostles. There is scarcely less reason to believe their evidence on this point than on that of the apostolic writings. The permanence of the Church in each place, the continuity of the successions of bishops from the beginning, were a guarantee of the truth of the tradition. That which was regarded with profound veneration could not have been lately and carelessly introduced. Moreover, the doctrine which had come down through diverse channels was the same, proving that it had a common source in that past, still not very distant, in which it claimed to have originated. The Creed, in the earlier forms in which it has come down to us, was its main embodiment. The view of the origin of the Creed which the language of Irenæus and Tertullian suggests, is that it grew from that oral teaching of the apostles and first evangelists, the recollection of which, as we have said, lived on side by side with the written records. It was the substance of their simplest and most universal message, the summary of the great heads of teaching upon which they everywhere insisted. It is not necessary to suppose that the assembled apostles ever, in a formal manner, agreed upon this outline

As a witness
to the apos-
tolic rule of
faith.

of teaching.¹ The composition of it, by a process of this kind, seems inconsistent with the temper and circumstances of the age; and we first meet towards the close of the fourth century with the assumption that it was shaped by such a gathering.² The universal requirements of their work, the common spirit which animated them, and the communion between the Churches of different places, seem sufficient to account even for the same form of words being everywhere received. To Jew and Gentile alike the Apostolic message was that Jesus was the Christ, that He had suffered and risen again the third day, and that He would come again to be the Judge of both quick and dead. In preaching to the heathen, they had to prefix the proclamation that there is one true God, the Maker of heaven and earth. Lastly the doctrine of the Spirit was necessarily dwelt upon, seeing that His mission was distinctive of the New Covenant. Examples of their preaching in the Book of Acts, and allusions in the Epistles, confirm this view. And the Baptismal formula may also, as commonly supposed, have commended this

¹ Dr. Lumby, *History of Creed*, pp. 4, 5, favours the idea of a formal agreement on the part of the apostles more definitely than I should venture to do.

² Rufinus, *Comment. in Symb. Apost.*, § 2, written circ. A.D. 390.

outline with its three divisions. Thus the Creed has, if the evidence as to its history be duly considered, a value of its own, distinct from that of Holy Scripture. It was not drawn from, and in a certain sense does not rest upon, Scripture. It is an independent witness, the precious relic which has come down even to our own day of that oral apostolic instruction which was once the only form in which the faith was delivered.

Once more it ought to be admitted that the singular success which attended the great work of doctrinal definition done in the fourth and fifth centuries concerning the person of

At the great
period of doctrinal
definition.

Christ and the Christian conception of God, proves that the Church is able to do such work soundly. Upon the subjects which were then fiercely disputed, and which are in themselves full of difficulty, the vast majority of Christians to this day—in spite of the occasional recrudescence of old heresies as in the case of the Arianism of the last century—adhere to the doctrines which were then formulated by the Catholic Church. Many of them may attach comparatively little value to the formulas themselves, and may belong to bodies which have not even retained them as their own standards. But when the history of Christian doctrine is impartially reviewed, it can hardly be

doubted that the acquiescence in the truths which are so widely cherished would not be so general and ready as it is, if they had not become established as part of the accepted Creed of Christendom, by the help of the definitions in question.

For my own part, I am convinced that if the recollection of all this work were obliterated from the mind of Christendom it would have to be done over again, because the questions involved are such as must be faced sooner or later by any intelligent Christian faith. Nor can I doubt that the conclusions reached would be in effect the same, though they might be expressed in part in new terms taken from contemporary philosophical language.

Now, on such a point as the apostolicity of the

The basis of
the Church's
authority in
these cases.

New Testament writings, the authority of the Early Church is plainly that of a witness. But in all other cases, also, the basis of the Church's authority is testimony, the testimony of a number of minds imbued with the principles of Christian life and faith, as to what that life and faith are. On some points we believe the consent has been so general, and yielded by minds in many respects so differently placed, or the whole question has been so thoroughly sifted through controversy, and the final verdict upon it has been so

unmistakeable, and the exceptions to the general agreement are so clearly not of a character to destroy its force, that no room for doubt can well remain, for those at all events who believe that the Divine Spirit works in, and the Divine Providence watches over, the Christian society. As individuals, they may not appreciate the importance, or understand the grounds, of the conviction that has been formally expressed, or that is manifestly diffused throughout the body; and till they have come to do so they cannot fully profit by it, or help to persuade men of it by their own testimony. But they are sure that with more light and greater spiritual discernment, and if placed at the right intellectual standpoint so far as particular forms of thought have been required for the expression of the truth, they, too, would perceive that the articles in question are involved in Christian faith.

The principle which we have just insisted on is identical in real purport with the rule of Vincentius. Manifestly the rule was not intended to apply literally. For it was the very existence of many divisions among men who all professed the Christian name which rendered such a test of truth necessary at all. Truths which always had been, and which still remained, unquestioned

The rule of
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needed no defence, such as the formula was designed to afford. Vincent himself fully recognizes this in explaining how the three notes, "œcumenicity," "antiquity," "consent," are meant to be understood.¹ He also notes the objection that will be raised, that his rule is incompatible with progress, and guards himself from misunderstanding on this head. The passage is so interesting and so pertinent in view of controversies still recent which were fought, in some sort, round Vincent's own formula, that I shall not be blamed for quoting at considerable length.

"But perchance some one says: Is there, then, to be no progress of religion in the Church of Christ? Let there be certainly, and that to the highest degree—for who is there so malignant to men, so hateful to God, as to attempt to prevent it?—provided only it be progress, not change, of faith. Since it is characteristic of progress that each thing should be amplified about itself, not converted from one thing into another. It behoves, therefore, that the understanding, the knowledge, the wisdom both of each individual and of the whole Church, should grow

¹ See *Commonitorium*, ch. ii. The word which I have translated "œcumenicity" is "universitas." To translate this "universality" is to create a confusion with the idea of "consent." It is plain that Vincent means "œcumenicity," the character of being world-wide, as the Catholic Church is.

and greatly and eagerly advance with the march of ages and generations, only in its own kind, that is to say in the same doctrine, the same meaning, the same judgment. Let the religion of souls imitate the law of bodies, which, although they evolve and unfold their proportions with the progress of years, yet remain the same that they were. There is a great interval between the flower of boyhood and the ripeness of old age, yet the same who were youths become old men, so that although the condition and habit of one and the same man are changed, there is nevertheless one and the same nature, one and the same person. The members of sucklings are small, those of young men are large, yet they are the very same members. Infants have so many limbs, men the same number, and if there is that which is brought forth at a more advanced age, it is already implanted after the manner of seed, so that nothing new comes forth afterwards in old men, which had not already before been latent in them as boys. Whence it is not doubtful that this is the legitimate and right law of progress, this the appointed and most beautiful order of growth, that the time of life should reveal in those more fully grown always those parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator had before formed in them

as children. Now, if the human form should afterwards be turned into any figure not of its own kind, or at any rate if any member should be added or taken away, the whole body must necessarily perish, or become monstrous, or at all events be weakened. Even so the doctrine of the Christian religion ought to follow these laws of progress, so that, namely, it may be consolidated with years, expanded with time, refined with age, and yet remain uncorrupted and unimpaired, and be full and perfect in all the measures of its parts and in all its members, so to speak, and proper senses, which allows of no further transmutation, no loss of any distinctive property, no variety of definition.”¹

These words describe admirably the characteristics of all sound development. Yet no doubt the rule for which the treatise is chiefly famous may be made to appear antagonistic to all development, and inconsistent with the very idea that the Church continues ever to be a living body.

The appeal to antiquity was specially characteristic of the English Reformation. And great divines of the English Church have throughout urged this test of doctrines and rites in their conflicts both with Rome and with Nonconformity. The Tractarians

¹ *Common.*, I. ch. xxiii.

laid peculiar stress upon it.¹ A line was thus suggested, if not drawn by all at the same epoch, or with perfect confidence by any, at which antiquity ended, the line made when East and West became disunited.² General Councils held, practices and beliefs that had generally spread, within this period, are regarded as authoritative.

Now, assuredly, the main principles involved in this view are sound. The faith which can claim absolutely the allegiance of Christians is the faith which has been one and the same from the beginning. And, in regard to the illustration and exposition of this faith, the Church of the ages nearest the apostles, the Church in her days of most vigorous life, when she gained her most remarkable conquests over the world, has a peculiar right to be listened to. And, further, the outward unity of the Church is indispensable, in order that there may be a full, collective expression of her mind; intercourse and communion are checks upon the tendencies to onesidedness corruption and error in different parts. And we cannot but believe that a special Divine blessing rests on

¹ See, for example, Newman. *The Prophetical Office*, pp. 63, 154, 155, 378, and Lecture ii. generally.

² On the difficulty of drawing the line with precision, see Newman, *ibid.*, Lecture viii. pp. 248-54.

her and all her counsels, in proportion as she maintains her unity, and is forfeited by disunion. Yet the authority of antiquity may easily be conceived and put forward in too formal a manner. Even doctrines and usages occurring well within the boundaries which may be reasonably fixed for it, have to be tested by their agreement with the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christ. They have also to be examined to see whether any distinction is to be drawn between their substance, which may be of enduring truth, and their form, which may have been due to accidental causes, and adapted to temporary needs. The Christianity of the best and purest times has had its defects, its narrownesses, its transitory and local clothing and colouring, its habits of thought which have now dropped completely away from the minds even of those Christians who most cherish the past. And, on the other hand, there is a danger, if we dwell too exclusively on the testimony of antiquity, that we may be undervaluing the lessons afforded by manifestations of Christian life in each succeeding age, and the ever new applications of Christian principles.

Possibly, in Dr. Newman's case, exaggeration at one time in respect to the prerogatives of antiquity may in part explain how he went to the opposite

extreme when he perceived that there had been, and could not but be, a growth in the apprehension and application of the Christian revelation, of which he had before failed to take sufficient account. "The rule of Vincentius," he wrote at that subsequent time, "strikes at Rome through England. It admits of being interpreted in one of two ways; if it be narrowed for the purpose of disproving the Catholicity of the Creed of Pope Pius, it becomes also an objection to the Athanasian; and if it be relaxed to admit the doctrines retained by the English Church, it no longer excludes certain doctrines of Rome which that Church denies. It cannot at once condemn St. Thomas and St. Bernard, and defend St. Athanasius and St. Gregory Nazianzen."¹

But surely it is possible to draw the line which Dr. Newman refuses to draw. We are not left to the means for distinguishing between true and false developments of Christian faith, which Dr. Newman regards as alone practicable, namely, whether or not they have obtained the approval of the occupant of the Papal chair. There are some doctrines and practices to which the life and the mind and voice of the Church at large have given a sanction that is altogether wanting to others among those which

¹ Essay on *Development*, p. 9.

Dr. Newman's test would place on one and the same level.

There is a criticism of Vincentius's principle coming from a very different quarter, which we must also notice. "The authority," says Archdeacon Wilson, "of an approximate consensus in the past is a real thing; it resides in the fact of some opinion having prevailed in the struggle. *It was the fittest for the human mind then*; it does not follow that it is the fittest now. The heterodoxy of one age sometimes becomes the orthodoxy of another. It may have been but the schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. But the proved fitness of any opinion in the past, or in another level of thought in the present, will make us hesitate long before we denounce it. We can only abandon it for a wider application of the Vincentian rule. We can only denounce it when it poisons as well as weakens spiritual life."¹ We cannot believe that the truth of one age can differ from the truth of another, in the way that these words would seem to imply. It seems impossible that when the Church collectively has testified to certain beliefs from the beginning, or when, in reply to fresh questions put to her, she has declared, even

¹ "Church Authority: Its Meaning and Value," in *Essays and Addresses*, by J. M. Wilson, p. 191.

in language more or less new, what the Christian faith, as held from the beginning, involves, such witness can be erroneous, or other than an acquisition for all time. The statements may need supplementing in one way or another; the definitions may be less easy to understand, because the terminology current in the time when they were made has become less familiar; still more the outward acts in which expression was given in successive ages to some great idea, may have been such as the circumstances of the age dictated; but the essential meaning must have been right and true. This we must at least hold if the pouring out of the Spirit on the company of the baptized, and Christ's oversight of His flock, are in any sense realities.

No single means, however, for the expression of the mind of the Church can be pointed out as the only trustworthy and divinely appointed one. Even on those questions on which a formal judgment was felt to be necessary, the measures taken to arrive at it have been various. And this variety is a fact of great significance. It suggests the thought that if the old methods should prove impracticable, new ways may, nevertheless, be found adapted to new conditions. During the first three centuries, when a General Council of the Church

How the
Church
speaks.

was an impossibility, owing to the hostility of the Roman state, synods were held in particular regions, and the bishops assembled at them communicated with their brethren elsewhere by means of synodical letters. But when the gathering together of the First General Council was brought about by Constantine, he did but enable the Church to adopt an instrument thoroughly congenial to her own spirit, as is proved by her application of the principle of synodical action in pre-Nicene days, so far as this was practicable. And it is impossible to study the history of the fourth and following centuries without feeling that the great Councils were actually a power of the greatest consequence, which could not, so far as we can see, have been dispensed with. By the Nicene Council, in particular, a position was occupied, a flag was planted. And during the conservative reaction against new definitions which followed, and the outbreak of Arian and semi-Arian teaching for which this reaction gave opportunity, the defenders of the faith themselves derived definiteness of aim and courage from what had been achieved at Nicæa; while the number of the members of the Council, their character, and the many parts of the Church from which they came, formed the subject of appeals, the force of which could not be gainsaid.

Yet even where General Councils have counted for most, they have only been one stage in the process whereby the Church's judgment has been ascertained. It is easy either to underrate or to overrate the importance of General Councils. Archdeacon Wilson negatives the idea that spiritual illumination has been "focussed" by means of General Councils.¹ This image, however, seems to me to express well what has often, in God's providence, been effected through them. Clear and distinct images of the truth have been produced through the gathered feeling and conviction of the bishops representing different portions of the Church. On the other hand, the spiritual eye of the Church at large must perceive these points of light, and recognize them as real indications of the truth and not delusive signs, before they can attain to the full authority of which they are capable. In order that General Councils might possess in themselves that final authority which some would seem from their language to attribute to them, it would be necessary that they should fulfil conditions which, in the actual history of the Councils called general, have not been fulfilled, or upon the adequate fulfilment of

¹ His words indeed are, "Does there, then, exist any means for so focussing this illumination as to produce a perfect light?" (*ibid.*, p. 188). We may waive the point whether the light is perfect. No focus includes all the rays proceeding from a luminous body.

which it would always of necessity be hard to satisfy ourselves. In order that a Council may have a claim to be regarded as general, it should manifestly be *representative* of the Church at large and *free*. The former of these characteristics may perhaps be said to belong to a Council which, besides being attended by the delegates of a large portion of the world, might have been attended by those of every region, if they had thought it necessary to make the effort. In this sense the great early General Councils may be held to have been representative of the whole Catholic Church. Those present at them came almost entirely from the Greek-speaking portion of the Church, that is, Western Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, and the adjacent districts of Europe, Greece proper, and the provinces to the north of it. The Church of these regions must at that time have been by far the more numerous, as well as the more active, relatively to the rest of the world. And if hardly any bishops came to them from the West, the reason was not that they would have been excluded. Nevertheless, if we had depended on the Councils alone to express the mind of the Church on the main subjects debated, a far more full participation in them of representatives of every part of the Church would have been necessary. In point of fact, the defect of generality in these assemblies is supplied

through the recognition which subsequently was accorded to them by the Church of North Africa, and Spain, and Gaul, and also of Rome and Italy, so far as the latter had not already taken part in them.

Again, it is plainly involved in the idea of General Councils as true representative assemblies of the Church, that their members should not be fettered in the expression of their judgments by any strong constraint arising, for example, from the intimidation exercised by a powerful ruler, or a dominant faction. The present writer believes that at the early Councils the genuine convictions of their members did, on the whole, find utterance, in spite of much violence and many intrigues which have brought suspicion on the proceedings of some of them. Nevertheless, if our faith rested on them as perfect instruments for the ascertainment of truth, instead of upon the sanction which the results attained by them received from the after judgment of the Church, we should need an assurance as to the purity and sincerity of the spirit animating them which a study of their history, so far as it is known to us, might hardly create.

The necessity for this test of œcumenicity, which consists in the reception of the Council and its work by every portion of the Church, is recognized by eminent writers of different schools. The principle

is laid down with great clearness by Bishop Wordsworth in the following passage:—"A Council may, indeed, style itself a General Council if it is lawfully convened from different parts of Christendom, and if its members are free, and if they are resolved to proceed on sound principles and in a lawful manner. But, to speak more accurately, no Council can be predicated *à priori* to be a General or Œcumenical Council. The proof of its generality or œcumenicity is derived from the reception of its dogmatic decrees by the general consent of Christendom. The Councils of Nicæa, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon are rightly called General Councils, because their decrees have been generally received—and are received to this day—by the Eastern and Western Churches."¹ The learned authors of Janus write to much the same effect.² And in the time of an older struggle than that which called forth the opinions of these writers, Bossuet perceived that even a General Council, to which he especially looked as a protection against the aggressions of the Papacy, might be used in its interests, unless the confirmation of the decrees of the Council, which should give them validity, were

¹ *Miscellanies*, i. p. 314. "Paper on the Vatican Council, delivered to candidates for Ordination in the Diocese of Oxford." Cf. also *Theoph. Anglic.* ch. v.

² See Note J, "Opinions as to Authority of General Councils."

held to rest not solely with the Papacy, but on some wider confirmation by the Church.¹

A Council which can lay no claim to be oecumenical plainly cannot commend its decisions with the authority possessed by one which approximates to such a character. But it may do what is necessary in the way of bringing a controversy to an issue and formulating a judgment upon it, and the Church by its subsequent assent may confer an authority upon the doctrine which has been defined by its help comparable to that attaching to doctrines, in the establishment of which General Councils have played a part. The settlement of the controversies raised by the appearance of Pelagianism affords an instance of this. None of the synods held were of more than local character. Yet wherever the question has been understood, their verdict upon it has been accepted by the Church as her own. In the Eastern portion of the Church it never excited great interest. And their own conflicts with the fatalism of Greek thought had led them rather to insist on the reality of human responsibility,² the truth complementary to those which the opponents of Pelagianism were guarding; so that they even felt at first sight a certain amount

¹ See passage quoted from Bossuet, by Dr. Pusey, *Eirenicon*, p. 32.

² See p. 130.

of sympathy with Pelagianism. Circumstances have never forced them to come to a decision. But throughout Western Christendom, even among those who make least account of the tradition of Church teaching, it has been generally felt that the points in the Pelagian teaching which were inconsistent with the Christian faith were singled out with true discrimination. And the doctrine of grace, as it came then to be conceived and taught with new definiteness has, in the main, received the warm assent of earnest Christian minds, as being truly involved in the Christian revelation and required by Christian experience. This instance is of special interest because it seems to show that even the divisions of Christendom need not be a fatal bar to well-assured progress in the knowledge of the truth in separate portions. It is scarcely too much to say that those who acknowledge the principle of Church authority feel as little doubt about the rightness of her decision on Pelagianism, though only the West has spoken, as on the great questions upon which East and West have alike pronounced. Thus it would seem that thorough confidence may sometimes be felt in the judgment of a portion of the Church, when the matter has not been decided in a contrary sense by other portions after being brought fairly before them, and when

(as is assumed in every case) the tests of agreement with Holy Scripture, and with the fundamentals of the Christian faith, as it has been always received, have been faithfully applied.

But, lastly, beliefs manifested in the life of the Church, customs, practices, and the convictions which they imply, may have their authority, though they have never been enjoined in any formal

manner. What, in such cases, are the tests of validity? No Council, it may be, has

The authority of the forms of the Church's life.

pronounced upon them, at least during the first few centuries; there was nothing to call for it because for ages they gave rise to no controversy. And the very fact that for long, or perhaps very generally to the present day, they have remained unchallenged, makes their claim on our adhesion the more constraining. We must not expect, however, to obtain precisely defined doctrinal conceptions from this source; these are the fruits of the scrutiny of grounds, and the delimitations, and careful weighing of words, which controversy promotes and renders necessary. Rather we should look here to find chief elements of Christian faith, great features of Christian life, broadly indicated to us. At the core of theories and modes of life and action which look, and possibly are, very diverse, there may be in reality the same conviction.

And when this is so, and if we find such a principle or point of faith widely spread and persistent through long periods, and if it can be traced back to the very verge of the apostolic age, and discovered albeit in a rudimentary form, as yet undeveloped, in the dimmest period of the history of Christian thought and life, and if, in addition to all this, it can be shown to be consistent with the teaching of the New Testament itself, it has a plain title to guide and control the thought and the practice of all professing Christians.

Let me first take an instance which will appeal to many who may be reluctant to admit the justice of those to which I shall afterwards turn. There have been diverse theories concerning the nature of the efficacy of the Atonement for our sins made by Christ. One which was very prevalent in early ages has been entirely abandoned. The line of speculation which began with Anselm gave rise to another class of explanations. One of these has widely established itself among those Christians who have most deeply felt the influence of Calvin and his school. But for many centuries it was practically unknown, and it is still unfamiliar to multitudes of the faithful throughout a large portion of the Christian Church, while it is felt to be impos-

Instances :—
The faith in
the Atonement.

sible by an increasing number of devout and thoughtful minds who know it well. Underlying these theories, however, and spreading far more widely, nay, embraced by all the most devout Christian believers of every age and region of the world there has been, as the foundation of all the most earnest Christian worship and life, the central conviction that our sins are remitted for Christ's sake—that explain it how we may, or though we cannot at all explain it, the sacrifice of Christ is, to use Dr. Dale's expression, "the objective ground of our forgiveness."¹ And I cannot doubt for my own part that the authority of this generally diffused belief has restrained many a man who, perplexed and repelled by some theory of the Atonement, of which he saw the intellectual inconsistencies or the moral difficulties, was inclined to whittle down the plain statements of Scripture, and to reject the very idea of the Atonement itself; and has led such, and many others to whom at first this truth has been without meaning, to apprehend and cherish it, and enshrine it in their inmost souls.

I believe that the place, so to speak, of the great sacraments of the Gospel in the economy of redemption is marked out for us and

The doctrine
of the sacra-
ments.

¹ R. W. Dale on *The Atonement*.

commended to us by an authority of the same kind, and which is not appreciably less constraining, if the whole Church from the beginning be considered. It does not attach to any precise theory, like that of transubstantiation in the Eucharist, but to such points as the following:—the general conception of what Holy Baptism does for us; the reality of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist; the truth that His very life is offered objectively to every communicant, though he can only truly partake by faith; and that there is therein a divinely appointed perpetual effectual pleading of Christ's death before the throne of God; and the general shaping, as it were, of a Christian's life about these, and in a subordinate degree about other, sacramental ordinances.

The same may be said of the general idea of the Church, the main features of her organization, the principles involved in the constitution and functions of her ministry, the great purposes for which she exists.

I know that there are many among us, both within and outside the English Church, whom I shall not carry with me on these points, and whose godliness is, nevertheless, worthy of the heartiest recognition. And I know, also, that there are eminent historical students who hold, and who, in recent works which

have been very much praised, have argued, that the beliefs which I have indicated, though they appeared very early, were due to adventitious influences, and did not form part of, or necessarily grow out of, the essence of the Christian scheme, as the apostles delivered it. I cannot, however, myself doubt that this view must be rejected, if the early history of Christianity is studied with sympathy and discernment, and a well-balanced and comprehensive estimate is formed of the whole evidence. It is not necessary, however, that we should enter upon an investigation of these subjects here. My purpose in alluding to them has simply been to give distinctness to the notion of the principle for which I am contending, and to show its importance by these illustrations of the way in which it may be found to apply.

I have represented the authority of the Church—an authority proceeding from the declared faith and the life of virtually the whole Church, or of greater or smaller portions of it—not as something homogeneous, infallible, and absolute throughout, but as varying indefinitely, in strength, from cases in which it is practically impossible that it should be wrong to others in which its apparent utterance may yet need much confirmation before it can be relied on, or may require much correction, or in which it ought, per-

chance, to be altogether rejected.¹ And I have endeavoured to indicate the principles on which this varying strength is to be measured.

But I shall be asked, Who, then, do you make the judge to decide between the different portions of the body of doctrines and practices which may seem, at first sight, to be all alike included in the Church's teaching? Or perhaps I shall be told—You will plainly be forced to make the individual the ultimate judge, and so you will in reality prove an adherent of the principle of private judgment, however you may seek to disguise the fact. Some remarks are necessary on this head before the present section can be brought to a close.

In the first place, even if the mind and conscience of the individual are still the final referee, we have at least pointed out in the study of the faith and life of the Church of past ages a method for arriving at religious truth, a source of Divine knowledge, which each may use according to his ability and opportunities. There is a great difference between the attitude of mind of one who looks for guidance only to his own inner light, or to his own powers

¹ The view of Church authority which I have given seems to agree with that indicated by Dean Church in incidental remarks in his *Oxford Movement*. See Note K.

employed upon the interpretation of Scripture, and of one who in addition has recourse to the teaching and usages of the Church as aids in the formation of his own judgment. And if there is any force in the considerations that have been urged in this essay, the latter temper and principles are far sounder and juster, and more likely to lead to true results than the other.

But a view which seems to leave the individual to call the Church before his bar for examination, does not represent what should be the relations between them. It is the part of the Church to teach with authority, and she should be listened to by her children with deference and a predisposition to accept her word. The Church should set forth the truth in purity and fulness, and without ambiguity. And each individual who has been brought up, or has found a home, within any portion of the existing Church that in any true sense does this, owes to her a great debt on that account. She does not, however, relieve individuals from responsibility, or supersede by her teaching the exercise of their own study and reflection and spiritual intuition, so far as they are capable of each. How should she, since by so doing she would cut at the roots of her own life? For what is her testimony but their conspiring testimony, strengthened and corrected by combination and com-

parison? Or her activity but the outcome of their thought and labour? A true view cannot be formed of the function of the individual if we lose sight of the society, or of the society if we ignore the individual. The individual must think and judge, but he should do so with the consciousness that he is but one member in a vast organism. He must live in a larger life; he must think as one whose own weak and narrow thoughts should be guided and controlled by the worthier, truer thoughts of a vaster mind.¹

This point may be enforced by noticing the two chief defects, as they seem to me, of Tractarian teaching on the subject of authority. First, it did not sufficiently recognize, as we have already had occasion to observe, the element of fresh perception and active judgment involved in applying the great principles of the Christian revelation to new needs, in deciding in what respects new views and systems were inconsistent

¹ Prof. Maurice, in speaking of the Reformers, makes the following pregnant observation:—"They believed that the Bible had its peculiar lesson for every one, and not merely its general lesson for the world. But to ascertain how the peculiar lesson and the general lesson bear upon each other, and under what circumstances and conditions any given man may hope to profit by either, we must know whether he is in his true state when he is living in a certain body, or when he is standing aloof and asserting his independence."—*Kingdom of Christ*, vol. i. p. 103, third edition.

with the ancient faith, and generally how that faith stood affected by, and what must be the Church's attitude towards, the changing and widening thought of the world. They confined the office of the Church too much to the mere literal preservation of tradition, and in matters of doubt to an interrogation of antiquity, after the manner in which we may examine documents to prove a fact in history. And then, partly perhaps as a consequence of this, it was their tendency to ignore too much, though they never altogether denied, the duty which is incumbent upon individuals of "trying the spirits whether they are of God,"¹ of examining and judging, not indeed in isolation, but as members of the body. And they were thus in danger of taking away the basis for any true explanation of the authority of the Church herself. An example of this, which it will be useful to refer to, is afforded by Dr. Newman's treatment, in his *Prophetical Office of the Church*, of the question raised by the sixth article, viz. "Who is to be the judge what is and what is not contained in Scripture?" He rightly observes that the English Church is silent on this point. But he contends that she is so, because she does not allow that there can be any *judge* of such a matter in the strict sense at all. She

¹ 1 John iv. 1.

does not claim this office for herself, much less would she suffer individuals to assume it. The Church of to-day is, properly speaking, only a witness of the sense of Scripture, as she has learned it from antiquity; she is "a witness and keeper of Catholic tradition." It is the part of individuals simply to receive what is thus delivered to them.¹

Now, if this were the whole function both of the Church and of individuals, we should be left in the difficulty that there would be no faculty anywhere for perceiving the agreement between the tradition and the Scriptures. We should be required simply to accept the tradition, when well certified, on trust, as truly stating the mind of Scripture. But even the most indubitable tradition would fail of its highest use for us. It would not illuminate Holy Scripture, because there would be no eye to see the illumination. It is still more obvious that there would be no opportunity for applying such a test, as the English Church must have meant to supply in this article, to the various portions of tradition. The only question with regard to each portion would then have been whether, as a matter of history, it could claim to have been "always and everywhere received."

¹ *Prophetical Office of the Church*, Lect. xi, pp. 311, ff.

Both Dr. Newman, in those his Anglican days,¹ and other writers seem to me, indeed, to have successfully shown that the English Church did not dream that it ought to be left to individuals to decide, each for himself, what doctrines were contained in, or rites sanctioned by, Scripture. The framers of the Articles would, however, seem to have been silent on the question who was to be the judge, because circumstances did not require them, or because they were unprepared, to undertake the difficult task of assigning to the Church collectively, and to her individual members, their respective parts, though they probably perceived more or less clearly that there was a place for each.

God overrules and guides the course of the world, yet individual characters and lives have done much in bringing about the ends which He has willed. So it is with the Church. As we glance over her history, individuals seem to have counted for as much in it as in that of the world; and this, not only in heroic labours for the extension of God's kingdom, but also in intellectual conflicts to guard the purity of the faith, in efforts of heart and mind for attaining to a deeper and fuller knowledge of Divine truth. So far as we can see, the preservation and full establishment of the right faith concerning the Person of our

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

Lord Jesus Christ was mainly due to the firmness and courage of Athanasius, and next to him to Hilary of Poitiers, to Basil of Cæsarea, and the two Gregories. And again, the errors of Pelagius were condemned under the inspiration of Augustine, whose own personal experience had given him a singularly clear and vivid hold upon the doctrine of grace. Moreover, in each of these times of controversy, as in others, multitudes of ordinary men had to take their side according to the best of their judgment, often, it might be (as in the former of the two periods of conflict just referred to), in opposition to much seeming authority, that might be urged against whichever view they adopted. Nevertheless, even those who seem to have been called most to stand forth as solitary witnesses have owed their knowledge and their faith, in regard to a large circle of truths, to the instruction of the Church, and often on those points on which they may seem to have been required to act with most independence in facing new difficulties, they have derived their inspiration from having been able to discern her true voice.

SECTION III.

Characteristics required in the Church.

We have considered what functions are included in the Teaching Office of the Christian Society, and the guarantees and tests of the valid exercise of those functions. It remains that we should single out the chief characteristics which the society ought to possess, in order that it may discharge these functions. I would premise that there will be before us an ideal which is far from being anywhere fully, and which never has been more than approximately, realized. Yet there may be, and I believe are, broad distinctions in the extent to which different communities of Christians depart from it, such as will justify the view that some are portions of the Church and others are not. But if the following line of argument wears a harsh aspect towards those who are excluded, I hope that the effect of this may be mitigated in a measure by some subsequent remarks.

I would name three characteristics of the true condition of the Church as those which we are taught to seek for by all that has been urged in the preceding argument:—*continuity of life, unity, freedom without licence.*

1. Continuity might indeed be treated as part of the idea of unity; it is unity between the successive ages of the Church from the beginning. Yet it is necessary to distinguish this aspect of unity. For it is the most important, since fidelity to the fundamentals of the faith, as they have been always received, is the Church's primary duty, and the basis on which alone she can rightly define truth in answer to new questions.

Continuity of doctrine is secured through upholding ever the great ancient standards, the Catholic Creeds, and again, through forms and rites which preserve the treasures and enshrine the spirit of the devotion of past ages. The principle that the Christian Ministry can be duly perpetuated from generation to generation only through an Episcopate which can trace back its descent to the apostles, or to men commissioned by them to ordain, is a guarantee of this continuity. The modes of nomination, and virtually (it may be) of appointment, to vacant bishoprics have been very diverse, and the suitability and expediency of these different modes may well be matters for anxious consideration. But whatever the one in use may be, there is always the check that the already existing Episcopate or its chief, or chiefs, can refuse consecration. And there is good ground for the

hope that in any clear case of moral or doctrinal unfitness they would exercise this power of refusal, at whatever risk to themselves. Men placed in the position of chief pastors cannot but feel in general the solemn responsibility of their office. Over admission to the lower orders of the Ministry they have an unfettered discretion. The provision for guarding soundness of doctrine, which the unbroken successions of bishops afforded, was insisted on with peculiar emphasis in the latter part of the second century. When prolonged through many centuries, and subjected to all kinds of influences, these successions no longer offer the same security, and could not, perhaps, by themselves be relied on. Yet, taken in conjunction with accepted formularies, they must plainly be of great strength. The safeguard may fail in particular instances, but on the whole it will be efficacious. There may be indifference, or worse, spread through the Episcopate for whole generations. Yet the spirit and traditions of the office, together with the formularies of which it is the appointed guardian, will always be of sufficient force to revive the sense of responsibility for handing on intact, and committing to faithful men, the sacred deposit of the faith. Apart from these direct effects of a truly legitimate government, the idea of the

continuous life of the Church as a true Society, derived from Christ Himself through His apostles, no less a real organism than any of the nations of the world are, but with unspeakably more august traditions than the greatest of these, is manifestly fitted to chasten and elevate the thoughts and stimulate the wills of its members. Those who have realized how significant a fact the existence of such a society must be, will not think the belief a strange or narrow one, that God has specially pledged the bestowal of His grace upon men through it, in its appointed ordinances.

2. But if *continuity* confers on the Church, or any portion thereof, her chief claim to be heard, and is her qualification for the discharge of her principal obligation, that of being a witness and keeper of "the faith once delivered to the saints," *unity* is likewise necessary in order that she may adequately set forth in each successive generation the truth which she has received, and attain to greater fulness and depth in the apprehension of it through the interchange of the fruits of the gifts and the experiences of many, and meet the demands made of her by the rise of fresh doubts and errors, and in short realize in herself the character of the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God, bringing forth from her treasury things

new as well as old.¹ Unity of action and of life there should be, between all the Christians of each place or region; and unity of intercommunion between the different portions thus marked off from one another simply by geographical boundaries. Far as Christendom, at present, is from such a condition, we should not be discouraged from striving after it. For every approach to it, in any respect and in any part, will secure some of that greater efficiency which is the result of unity, in proportion as it is enjoyed.

The unity, it must be, of joint membership in one society. There is a strain of unreality, not to say insincerity, about professions of unity of spirit while outward separation continues. Those who speak of the differences of organization which divide Christians as being unimportant, lay themselves open to the charge that, in the face of all the sacred obligations to unite, and the certainty that it would bring new strength to the cause of Christ in the world, they are suffering that which they hold to be merely unimportant to separate them. Again, the co-operation for a cherished object of those who, while they belong to different bodies, are united by the fact that they value above everything else some one doctrine, or set of doctrines, distinct from those which all Christians

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

hold in common, does not fulfil the conditions for earning those blessings which have been described above. These are to be expected when Christians placing foremost the great truths of the Creed, which should stand first in the estimation of all, and sharing their convictions concerning the main features of the constitution and life of the Church sufficiently to render common worship and action possible, are bound together in one body by the strong sense of the duty of union. They then bring into the common stock whatever spiritual knowledge God has communicated to each, while the discipline of a common life corrects their partialities, and teaches them to subordinate their private views, however valuable in their place, to the great articles of faith. They are then like a family governed by a spirit of unselfishness, in which differences of temperament and of tastes and of intellectual gifts do not break up, but enrich, the life of the whole.

3. We have insisted on the necessity of external unity in the Church, because it is the sacrament—at once the means and the outward expression—of the unity which is invisible. Yet the mind may be too much fixed on the outward unity, to the neglect of the cultivation of the spirit of unity. One safeguard against this is to be found in *freedom* within the

Church, freedom without licence. Freedom tends to secure reality.

That, indeed, which chiefly promotes the true sense of unity is the consciousness of having fundamental principles in common. And on this the profitableness of all intercourse in the Christian society mainly depends. We know how useless argument is between those who do not start from the same premisses. On the other hand, among those who do, discussion helps both sides to gain a clearer conception of the principles and to appreciate more truly the range of their application. Provided there are humility and mutual respect, and things non-essential and secondary are kept in a due position of subordination relatively to the fundamental articles of the faith, nothing but good should come from free conference and spontaneous life in the Church.

Such freedom is, moreover, necessary in order that the Church may judge and bear her testimony at fresh crises in the history of the faith. Her freedom may be taken away either by oppression from without, depriving her of common action and speech, or by an iron rule within which suppresses the utterance of genuine convictions, so that, although she speaks, her voice does not proceed from the collective mind of her members.

I do not propose to enter here upon any defence of the English Church, either to show against Romanists that her continuity is not vitiated at its very source by an act of schism, that her internal disunion is not such as to take from her all marked character and authority, and that she is not the mere creature of the state; or, again, against Nonconformists that her alliance with the state is not in principle such as to destroy her spiritual freedom. These are grave questions, and they are suggested to the mind by the mention of those characteristics which I have enumerated, as needful for the Church in order that she may duly teach. But their treatment would involve us in discussions as long and as complicated as those in which we have been already engaged. My purpose has been to consider abstractedly the general conception and nature of authority in things spiritual. This in itself has been an undertaking, to do justice to which has been beyond my powers, and I have doubtless taxed severely the patience of my readers. One or two remarks, however, are necessary before concluding, on the position of Nonconformists, in order to render clear the argument which has been pursued.

I have referred to the testimony of the Christian consciousness as affording the true basis of Church authority, and also as, in actual fact, wider than it,

In the Catholic Church, which has safeguards for continuity, and which asserts the principle of unity, and ought to be marked by the reality of it, as also by true freedom, there is provision for the sound and regular exercise of this testimony. But we would not ignore its value when it comes from those bodies whose very existence is a defiance to the principles of continuity and unity.

We have, as compared with the Fathers, and even, perhaps, as compared with many Churchmen of generations immediately preceding the present, both gained and lost something in our view of separatists. The strength of their language against schismatics was, doubtless, largely due to their horror of the sin of schism; and we are in danger of feeling far too great laxity in respect to it. But, on the other hand, we perceive more clearly than they did that the responsibility for schisms is often to be distributed between the Church and those who have left her, and we are better able to make allowance for the variety of causes that determine human belief and opinion, and for the persistence of particular habits of thought. We, also, are more eager to accord cordial recognition to the Christian graces which are to be found among Nonconformists, and to the great spiritual work they have done. Instead of contending, with St. Augus-

time, that their baptism can avail them nothing so long as they remain separated from the Church, and that it is only when they become united to her that its latent potency is awakened, we are generally anxious to make the most of the fact that because of their baptism they are members of the Church.

We cannot but be thankful for the witness borne by separatists to great truths, and the devotion to our Lord which they manifest. Our hearts are drawn to them on these accounts. They bring much strength in the conflict with the unbelief of the world. And, moreover, it seems to have been the will of God to use the rise of sects both in ancient and in modern times in order to emphasize, even by their exaggerations, aspects of truth which the Church was forgetting. If, however, there is any force in the considerations that have preceded, this fact does not alter in any way the duty of Nonconformists to become reunited to the Catholic Church, and of striving with us to make it a little less unlike Christ's design.

In this connexion the English Church seems to me to suggest an attitude in regard to the doctrine concerning the Church, which has, I venture to think, been far too much overlooked. Her formularies and other authorized documents are not a bundle of inconsistencies; they imply a distinct view on the subject,

a view which is, to say the least, intelligible. On the one hand, no definition of the Church is given which would expressly exclude from it all bodies that have not the historic episcopate. There was strong reason at the Reformation epoch, and during the century and a half following, for avoiding giving offence to foreign Protestants. Towards sectaries at home the same tenderness was not felt. There was, indeed, so little question that the existence of sects was contrary to true state policy, that their position from the purely ecclesiastical point of view was scarcely considered. On the other hand, the whole constitution and character of the English Church, her Ordinal, her preservation of the ancient Creeds, and of ancient forms of worship, her appeals to the Fathers and early Councils, show plainly what she considers the polity of the Church ought to be. It is as though she said to bodies of more doubtful position, "We will not take upon ourselves to unchurch you. We will waive the question of the *esse* of the Church, using language in our definition of it which may possibly include you. But we know what belongs to her *bene esse*, and that we will scrupulously guard. Moreover, we maintain the principle that the Christians of the same place, the same race, the same nation ought not to be divided among themselves, and this is the Church of the English nation."

This is the position of the school which has been called that of the Anglo-Catholic Divines, in the seventeenth century,¹ and it has been and is, I believe virtually that of a vast number of English Churchmen, though some would lay most stress on the reserve as to the position of other bodies, some on the positive assertion of the Church's own principles. This view is, however, unquestionably less definite than that held for the most part in the ancient Church, and also than that which English High-Churchmen have, since Tractarian days, felt it their duty to insist upon.

But if we could all fix our thoughts on what the ideal of the Church is, and on what she requires in order to fulfil adequately her mission, there need not be all this painful discussion as to the boundary line, which just includes and just excludes. Each would be anxious to secure for himself and for all the amplest inheritance, the fullest blessings, which Church life can bestow.

I have striven to set forth the conditions at once for stable strength and true progress in the faith. "Whereunto we have already attained," says St. Paul,² "by that same rule let us walk." He is referring to

¹ See Note L, "Anglo-Catholic Divines on the Church."

² Phil. iii. 15, 16.

a knowledge of truth which had been already won, if only men would recognize the fact, or which, though they might not deny it, those whom he was addressing, did not value as they should have done relatively to debatable points. They might, if they would, enter into possession of it; and it ought to furnish the common rule of faith and life. So in our day, there is a large body of truth to which the Church has in reality "already attained;" an inheritance which every Christian should regard as his own, and which would be seen to be far larger and more important than is commonly imagined, if we all sought to ascertain the truth and to teach it in the right spirit and by the right methods. And it comprises all that is most vital. The instruction of the young and the simple in it, and the endeavour to keep alive the sense of it in all, will ever be the chief task of Christian teachers. Moreover, the effort truly to apprehend it, even with the fullest aid that accurate definitions can give, will ever afford high exercise to the intellectual powers.

"But if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." If there are, as there must be, open questions, which different minds approach from different sides, the answer to them must be sought, not in the self-willed assertion of

these differences, not in making them the foundation of permanent divisions, of parties and sects, devices for throwing together those who think alike upon them, and preventing them from duly appreciating the habits of thought and the attainments and experiences of others. It would hardly need the words of apostles to warn us against this, as the very means for hiding truth from our eyes, were it not that the actual practice of men shows how strong the tendency to it is. No, the settlement of disputed points, the solution of new problems, the appropriation of new knowledge from whatever quarter it may come, in such wise that it may contribute to advance in the knowledge of Divine truth, shall be secured through viewing all things in the broad light which God pours down in His own chosen way, that is through the manifestation of the Incarnate Son in the life, from the beginning, of His body, the Church, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

NOTE A (p. 17).

INTUITIVE PERCEPTION OF DIVINE TRUTH.

In connexion with the subject of this Essay, it would be an omission if we did not recall the names of some of the chief of those who—without any desire of exalting human reason, or of detracting from the value and necessity of revelation, and in particular of that made in the Scriptures—have, in recent centuries, most earnestly held and taught that man has the power of recognizing intuitively “the things of God.” Their thought has been that the spirit of man is in a position of immediate dependence upon, and communion with, the Divine Spirit. They have vividly apprehended the force of the teaching in St. John’s prologue to his Gospel:—“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.” This should be an article of faith with every Christian, but it has had but little meaning, either for the unreflective, who even when sincere in their allegiance and devotion to the Christian religion, have taken too external a view of it, and regarded it too much merely as demanding obedience; or for those who have taken an exaggerated view of the effects of the Fall, and human depravity; or, again, for those who are inclined more to the logical use of the discursive intellect, than to meditating on the foundation-principles of thought and life.

The insistence of the early Quakers upon this truth of the Divine illumination of the individual spirit of man, is the point of highest interest in the rise of the sect. It inspired the uncouth utterances of George Fox. By Robert Barclay of Ury, that gentleman of ancient rank and scholarly education who threw in his lot with the despised people, and became the chief exponent of their doctrines, it was set forth with philosophic breadth of treatment.

Erskine of Linlathen may, perhaps, be most justly regarded as (in a general sense of the term) the father of the religious school which has given most prominence to this truth in modern times. The depre-

ciatory reference to him in Newman's *Prophetical Office of the English Church*, see p. 341, is not to the credit of Dr. Newman's largeness of mind. Erskine and Newman were most profoundly impressed with different sets of truths, which are complementary to one another. But the teaching of men like Erskine was as important as that of Newman and his friends, in the work of breaking up the formalism and dispelling the spiritual lethargy, which had been inherited from the eighteenth century.

The truth of which we are speaking received, in many respects, striking recognition both from the great Greek Fathers and from St. Augustine, while in them it was better balanced by other truths. Its modern exponents, with their mystical tendency, and affected by the special weakness to which mysticism is prone, have contented themselves with too vague thoughts as to the *modes* in which God makes Himself known. They have not sufficiently realized that even spiritual truth is and perhaps must be for the most part presented externally, though it needs to be recognized and appropriated by the individual mind. They have not considered how the light grows and broadens and becomes clear as the rays combine, which pass first through individual minds; nor understood that it is God's way to teach men moral and religious truth through a *social* growth and life. An illustration of this defect may be seen in McLeod Campbell's *Thoughts on Revelation*. It renders him strangely incompetent to deal with modern difficulties about the Bible, in spite of the deep reverence and the charity and consideration for doubters which the book breathes. He writes as though the truth of the doctrine of plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture could be intuitively perceived, whole and complete, by the individual mind. I cannot but think that this book must have sadly disappointed many who have found great help from that truly profound theological work, his treatise on the Atonement.

F. D. Maurice, as also S. T. Coleridge, while connected on one side with this school, were saved from its one-sidedness through their genuine English Churchmanship. This note affords an opportunity for saying a few words more generally concerning F. D. Maurice. The chief religious movements of the past sixty years are connected with the names of Newman and Maurice. They are the two men during this period whom we may speak of—if the term be permissible at all—as men of religious genius. More quickly than others they

saw the new questions that were dawning, more intensely than others they felt the new influences, and then sent them forth from themselves again with vastly multiplied power. And though Maurice was immeasurably inferior to Newman in powers of expression, and though he was without some other gifts for which Newman is remarkable, he is, surely, greatly the superior in breadth and sobriety of judgment and real reverence for truth.

The number of points, as it seems to me, on which he has indicated the true relation of Christian faith to other departments of knowledge and life, and the right attitude for its defenders to adopt in regard to questions that still press, is a mark of his greatness. It has been somewhat surprising to me to find how little direct help I have been able to derive from him on the subject of this Essay. He certainly felt himself the influence of the authority of the Creeds and of the life of the Church in guiding his own thought and moulding his convictions. But he does not seem to have given much consideration to the question of the position to be assigned theoretically to authority among the determining forces of religious belief. His view of the question of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles by undergraduates at Oxford, on matriculation, has appeared to most people somewhat of a paradox. However this may be, it at most had to do only with a side-issue. There is, also, less upon the subject of authority than might perhaps be expected in his *Kingdom of Christ*, though this may be sufficiently explained by the circumstances from which the book arose. To one pregnant remark of his I have referred on p. 190.

NOTE B (p. 49).

DEAN MANSEL AND BISHOP BUTLER.

From the manner in which Dean Mansel refers to Bishop Butler (*Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 228, ff., 243, first edition), it might be supposed that Butler was entirely at one with him in regard to our moral faculties. Nothing could well be farther from the truth. Bishop Butler does indeed say that "objections against Christianity, as distinguished from objections against its evidence, are frivolous." And this distinction probably suggested that quoted above from Dean Mansel. But Bishop Butler makes it with quite a different class of objections in view, namely, such as refer to the manner in which

revelation has been delivered, its *unexpected* character, the liability to error in those who have handed it down, etc. In the same context he says, "I express myself with caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself; or be supposed to assert that a supposed revelation cannot be proved false from internal characters. For it may contain clear immoralities and contradictions, and either of these would prove it false" (Part II., ch. iii.). He expresses himself to the same effect further on in the same chapter. Moreover, he repeatedly distinguishes objections against the morality of a revelation from others, and asserts that there are not in reality any such against the Christian scheme or the Scripture revelation generally. One apparent objection of the kind he deals with towards the end of the chapter, and he considers that he disposes of it. Further, in treating of the doctrine of Christ's Mediatorship, he allows that there is a kind of objection which would avail against it, namely, if it could be "shown positively not to be requisite, or conducive, to the ends proposed to be accomplished; or that it is in itself unreasonable." And he proceeds to examine one objection "which looks to be of this positive kind." A little further on he says, "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture in the name of God be given up" (Part II., ch. v.).

NOTE C (p. 63).

PROFESSOR FLINT ON THE ARGUMENT "E CONSENSU GENTIUM."

Professor Flint seems to be prejudiced in the same way, and also to mistake the real nature and cogency of the argument, when he says, in his examination of Mr. Mill's treatment of the subject (*Theism*, note viii. p. 348, ff, seventh edition), "He was entirely mistaken in representing it as an appeal to authority,—'to the opinions of mankind generally, and especially of some of its wisest men.'" Again—"The fact that religion is a natural and universal phenomenon, as widespread as humanity and as old as its history, and the fact insisted on in the lecture, that religion can only realize its proper nature in a theistic form, give us, when adequately established, the

modern and scientific statement of the old argument *e consensu gentium*." And again—"If it (the argument) prove that man's mental constitution is such that, in the presence of the facts of nature and life, religion necessarily arises, and that the demands of reason, heart, and conscience, in which it originates, can only be satisfied by the worship and service of one God, with the attributes which theism assigns to Him, it has accomplished all that can reasonably be expected from it." This, however, is not to put the argument in question into a scientific form, but to substitute another good, but essentially different, one for it; namely, one founded on a consideration of the constitution of man and the necessities of his position, such as these appear to us to be, from a survey of human beliefs and human life and its conditions.

NOTE D (p. 67).

BISHOP FORBES AND MR. W. PALMER ON "THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE."

Bishop Forbes, in his *Explanation of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. VI. p. 93, shows that he is conscious of the danger of reasoning in a circle on this subject. His chief argument for meeting the charge is embodied in an illustration. "It is no vicious circle to say that Holy Scripture proves the existence of the Church, and that this, the Church, proves Holy Scripture. An ambassador comes to a king, bearing his credentials in a letter. He himself is the authority for the genuineness of the letter; when the letter is opened, it is found to define the powers, plenipotentiary or other, of the messenger who brought it." This figure may be useful in some ways as an illustration, but it has the dangers of an illustration. In the comparison of the ambassador *bringing* the letter, much is assumed, in regard to the relations of the Church to Holy Scripture, which needs proving. Also there may be a verisimilitude in the letter, which has to be taken into account. This Bishop Forbes evidently recognizes, though he does not say so. For he continues, after the words I have quoted: "Thus it is with Holy Scripture. We have a set of documents which external and internal evidence, on the ground of the most rigid criticism, agree in holding to be genuine documents. They are certainly of the time of which they profess to be," etc. Thus he does not in reality rely solely on the authority of the Church.

Mr. W. Palmer, in his *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, Part III. ch. v. vol. ii. p. 84, first edition, deals with this question, and refers to the Roman treatment of it.

NOTE E (p. 130).

EXTRACTS FROM ORIGEN, "DE PRINCIPIIS."

This work has come down to us only in the Latin translation by Rufinus, who warns us that he has removed obscurities in his author, and altered the sense, also, where the views expressed were inconsistent with Origen's teaching in other writings. Nevertheless, the attitude at once to the rule of faith and to free inquiry, which is illustrated by the following extracts, is stamped in such a way upon the whole preface to the *De Principiis*, from which they are taken, and is so characteristic of the man (cf. Redepenning, *Origenes*, ii. p. 274), that we may at least thoroughly rely on the general impression which they leave upon the mind.

A few extracts are subjoined.

"Since, therefore, many of those who profess that they believe in Christ, are at variance not only in matters which are little and least, but also in great ones and the greatest of all, that is, about God, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit; and not only about these, but also about other beings, that is, about dominations, or holy powers;¹—it seems necessary first to lay down a sure line and manifest rule about these individual points, and then afterwards to inquire also about remaining points. For while many among Greeks and barbarians were promising us truth, we ceased to seek it among all who bolstered it with false opinions, when once we believed that Christ is the Son of God, and had persuaded ourselves that we were to learn it from Him; just so, since there are many who think that they hold Christ's doctrine, and the tenets of some of them differ from those of earlier generations, let the Church's teaching be held fast, which has been handed down through an orderly succession from the apostles, and remains in the Churches to this day. That truth alone is to be believed which disagrees in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolical tradition.

"This, however, should be known, that the holy apostles, in preach-

¹ The allusion is of course mainly to the Gnostic schools.

ing the faith of Christ, delivered their teaching, on certain points, namely, on whatever they deemed necessary, most clearly to all, even to those who seemed to be duller than the rest in regard to the search into Divine knowledge, while they left the theory of what they declared¹ to be inquired into by those who might win the excellent gifts of the Spirit, and especially might receive, through the Holy Spirit Himself, the grace of speech, wisdom, and knowledge. About other things indeed they said, that they are, but were silent as to how or whence they are, on purpose that all the more studious of those who came after them, who were lovers of wisdom, might be exercised; wherein those who had prepared themselves so as to be worthy and capable of receiving wisdom, might show the fruit of their mind." He proceeds to give illustrations, from which I will select two.

The doctrine of the Spirit. "Then finally" (he has just before spoken of the Father and the Son) "they delivered that the Holy Spirit is associated in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son. Herein it is not clear whether He is to be held to be begotten or unbegotten, or Himself also a Son of God or not; but those points are to be sought to the extent of our powers from Holy Scripture, and investigated with sagacious inquiry. Forsooth that that Spirit has inspired each one of the saints and prophets and apostles, and that there has not been one Spirit present in the ancients, another in those who were inspired at the coming of Christ, is most clearly preached in the Church."

The doctrine of the soul. After noting its individuality, immortality, the bliss or punishment awaiting it after death, the freedom of the will, and other points, as laid down in the Church's teaching, he passes to the question of the derivation of the soul, the famous controversy between Creationism and Traducianism. "But concerning the soul, whether it is derived from seed, so that its principle or substance is to be regarded as implanted in the very seeds of the body; or, indeed, has any other beginning, and whether this very beginning is created or not created; or, at all events, whether it is introduced into the body from without, or not, is not clearly taught."

The preface concludes with the following passage:—

"So, then, according to the precept which says, 'Kindle for your profit the light of knowledge,' it behoves every one to use elements

¹ "Rationem assertionis eorum."

and foundations (so to speak) of this nature, who desires to complete a certain series and body out of the theory of all these things, so that by manifest and necessary propositions on individual points it may be discovered what the truth is, and he may form one body, as we have said, out of instances and affirmations, either such as he has found in the Holy Scriptures, or which he has discovered by following out the sequence of thought and by the tenor of right reason."

NOTE F (p. 139).

THE ALLEGED AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IN REGARD TO THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE.

Decrees of Council of Trent, Session IV. For the difficulties in which this decree involved the Papacy and its defenders, see Salmon, *Infallibility of the Church*, pp. 226-9. There is a curious example of uncritical use of the Vulgate by Newman in his essay on *Development*, p. 112. In a passage in which he gives illustrations of sentences of Scripture, sometimes obscure, which support the definitions or received judgments of the early and mediæval Church, after giving several examples in words from the Authorized English Version, he suddenly turns to the Vulgate, quoting, "Laudate Dominum in sanctis Ejus," and "Adorate scabellum pedum Ejus," for the honour paid to creatures animate and inanimate. The Authorized and Prayer-book English Versions, though truer to the Original, would not have served his purpose. At this time, Newman had still not formally been admitted to the Roman Communion. There is an interesting account in *Personal Reminiscences of Cardinal Newman*, by A. W. Hutton, of his habit of quoting the Authorized Version to the end of his life.

The disposition shown by the late Dean Burgon and some other Churchmen to lay stress upon the evidence of the mass of cursive MSS., in determining the text of the Greek Testament, appears to have been due to the idea that this was the text which Church tradition supported. It may seem hardly worth while to draw attention to the language of a Church newspaper. Still it is evidence that a certain number of English Churchmen are influenced by the belief in question. The *Church Times* for July 3, in a notice of Prof. Sanday's *Oracles of God*, contained these words, "He follows Dr. Hort in stigmatizing the traditional texts of the New Testament as 'Syrian,' and the fruit of

imaginary recensions." And in the context it seems to be clearly implied that we receive this traditional text on the authority of the Universal Church.

The whole notice was written in a very unbecoming tone.

NOTE G (p. 144).

CONTROVERSIES CONCERNING TRADITION AT THE REFORMATION ERA.

It will be worth while to review briefly some of the evidence of the extent to which the minds of men were stirred on the subject of tradition in England (as elsewhere) at the era of the Reformation. In view of this, the singular moderation and caution of the language of the Thirty-nine Articles will appear the more striking. In these the ambiguous word "tradition," which was capable of being understood in a good as well as in a mischievous way, is avoided. Their framers confined themselves to laying down the positive test of agreement with Holy Scripture which all doctrines and rites must satisfy, if they are to be imposed as necessary to salvation.

The Roman application of tradition is well illustrated in Pole's letter to Cranmer (Strype's *Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, vol. iii., Appendix, 89, especially pp. 598, 603, 604); and in another letter of Pole's (*ibid.*, pp. 625, 626).¹ The notes on the subject in Cranmer's commonplace book are of special interest. He notes down a number of "unwritten traditions" from various Fathers. Then he adds, "And a thousand mo traditions apostolic there be, if we give credence to St. Denys, *De Ecclesiast. Hierarch.* Ignatius, *The Canons of the Apostles*, *Ecclesiastica et Tripartita Historia*, Cyprian, Tertullian, Irenæus, with other old ancient authors. And yet an infinite number mo we shall be constrained to receive, if we admit this rule, which St. Augustin many times repeats, that whatsoever is universally observed, and not written in the Scripture, nor ordained by general councils, is a tradition coming from the apostles. . . .

"Reasons. Idem. If traditions apostolic have the force of God's Word, so that every one is bound to the observation of them, the Bishop of Rome hath a great advantage thereby to establish his primacy: not such a primacy as he hath lately usurped, but such a primacy as

¹ These references are to the Eccles. Hist. Soc. edition, 1854.

he hath had by prerogative from the beginning; that is to say, to be one of the four patriarchs of Christendom, and the chief of all four. And the traditions be the chief authors, whereupon Pighius¹ stayeth himself. And furthermore, if we admit traditions to be of such authority, it is to be feared that we must resort to the Church of Rome to fetch there our traditions, as of the oldest and the mother Church. Irenæus, *Ad hanc*, etc. Cyprian calls Rome, *Petri cathedram et ecclesiam principalem*. Julius writing for Athanasius, etc., Melchiades, and other quotations he there mentioneth.

"The Old Testament was sufficient for the Jews: and is not both the Old and the New sufficient for us?

"What things came by traditions from the apostles, no man can tell certainly: and if we be bound to receive them as articles of our faith, then is our faith uncertain. For we be bound to believe we know not what." Strype, *Memorials Eccles.*, vol. ii. part I., temp. Edw. VI., bk. i. ch. xvii. pp. 215, 216 (edit. of 1822).

A tract entitled "A Confutation of Unwritten Verities," which is attributed to Cranmer by Strype, *ibid.*, p. 212, but appears not to have been by him (see Works of Archbishop Cranmer in Parker Society's publications, where it may be read). It employs language still stronger than that just quoted from the commonplace book.

The same point may be illustrated from the form of oath on admission to the mastership or to a fellowship in the Reformation statutes of many colleges. I take the exact words from the oath administered to fellows on their admission according to the Elizabethan Statutes of Trinity College, Cambridge. "Ego N. N. juro ac Deo testi promitto, me veram Christi religionem omni animo amplexurum, Scripturæ auctoritatem hominum judicii præpositurum, regulam vitæ et summam fidei ex verbo Dei petiturum, cætera quæ ex verbo Dei non probantur pro humanis habiturum . . . vera consuetis, scripta non scriptis, in religionis causa antehabiturum."

¹ Albertus Pighius, surnamed Campensis, was a controversial writer on the Roman side in the earlier half of the sixteenth century. It is worth while to glance through one or two of his treatises.

NOTE H (p. 149).

OPINIONS OF ROMAN CATHOLIC DIVINES ON THE RELATION OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION.

Though Mr. Palmer thinks that the decree of the Council of Trent may be harmonized with the language of the twentieth of the Thirty-nine Articles, he shows that such has not been the teaching of many eminent Roman Catholic divines. One example may here be taken from him. The words are quoted from Cardinal de la Luzerne, *Dissertation sur les Eglises Catholiques et Protestantes*, t. ii. p. 321. "We hold that unwritten tradition is an irrefragable rule of faith in two ways: first, by itself, because there are truths which have only been given to the Church by this way, secondly, because it is the most certain interpreter of the Holy Scripture, and the infallible means of knowing its meaning" (see Palmer, *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 46, first edition, 1838. Mr. Palmer gives references to some other writers on p. 17).

Milner, in his *End of Religious Controversy* (first edition, pp. 62, 63), writes: "You (Protestants) say that the whole of this (the Rule of Faith) is comprised in the *Written Word of God*, or *The Bible*, and that every individual is a judge for himself of the sense of the Bible. . . . On the other hand, we Catholics hold that the *Word of God in general*, both written and unwritten, in other words, *The Bible and Tradition*, taken together, constitute the Rule of Faith or Method appointed by Christ for finding out the true Religion; and that, besides the Rule itself, he has provided in his Holy Church a living, speaking Judge to watch over it and explain it in all matters of controversy." Again, p. 108, ff, he adduces witnesses who, as he contends, prove that "during the first five ages of the Church, no less than in the subsequent ages, the Unwritten Word, or Tradition, was held in equal estimation by her with the Scripture itself, and that she claimed a Divine right of propounding and explaining them both."

This language is not perfectly clear. Still the impression left on the mind is that Scripture and Tradition are placed on the same level, as powers of equal force and dignity, which mutually support each other.

NOTE I (p. 153).

GROUNDS ON WHICH THE INFALLIBILITY OF ROME IS BELIEVED IN.

In addition to the above argument for the claims of Rome, there are two others likewise of an *à priori* character, and closely connected with the one just given, though distinguishable from it. Obedience, it is said, is of the essence of the true religious temper, and only a Church furnished with infallible authority can make provision for the due cultivation of obedience, and of the Christian grace of humility. And once more, Papal Supremacy is necessary to secure the *sacramentum unitatis*, the preservation of the bond of the Church's unity, without which the Divine blessing will not be given. I have not formally discussed either of these, but the remarks made (p. 13, ff.) may be considered in connexion with the former of these, and (pp. 101 and 201) with the latter. Besides these arguments I do not know of any which have cogency. History, if studied dispassionately, is strongly against the claims of Roman infallibility, on every count of the controversy. It is only when studied with a predisposition created by the considerations above referred to, or arising from other causes, that any arguments in favour of them can be drawn from the field of history, or that the difficulties which it must have for the Romanist can be explained away. In this note and in the text I am referring only to the grounds of the Roman claims, strictly so called, and especially the claim to infallible authority, so far as they can be found in reason and history. I do not, however, desire to ignore the fascination which the Roman Church naturally possesses, as the Church of so large a portion of Western Christendom, and as continuing, and presenting to this day before our eyes, with the main features unaltered, the religious life which has been that of many past ages.

NOTE J (p. 180).

OPINIONS AS TO AUTHORITY OF GENERAL COUNCILS.

In regard to the necessity of the ratification of the decrees of Councils by the Church at large see further, *The Pope and the Council*, by Janus, § 32, p. 411, first edition.

"The Church in her totality is secured against false doctrine; it will not fall away from Christ and the apostles, and will not repudiate the doctrine it has once received, and which has been handed down within it. When a Council passes sentence on doctrine, it thereby gives testimony to its truth. The bishops attest, each for his own portion of the Church, that a certain defined doctrine has hitherto been taught and believed there; or they bear witness that the doctrines hitherto believed involve, as their logical and necessary consequence, some truth which may not yet have been expressly formulized. As to whether this testimony has been rightly given, whether freedom and unbiassed truthfulness have prevailed among the assembled bishops, on that point the Church herself is the ultimate judge, by her acceptance or rejection of the Council or its decision."

It would be very interesting to trace carefully the history of doctrine on the authority of General Councils. For that task, however, I am not prepared; yet it may be worth while to set down here a few passages, to illustrate the estimate of them formed at different times.

Athanasius, De Synodis, § 33. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὕτως αὐτοὶ πρὸς τε ἑαυτοὺς, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἑαυτῶν διετέθησαν, φέρε λοιπὸν ἡμεῖς, ἐξετάσαντες, μάθωμεν παρ' αὐτῶν, ποῖον ἔτοπον θεωρήσαντες, ἢ τίνα λέξιν αἰτιώμενοι τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων, ἀπειθεῖς μὲν γονεῦσι γεγόνασι, διαμάχονται δὲ πρὸς οἰκουμένην σὺν οὐδὲν;

Cf. *Ad Afros*, §§ 1, 2, 3.

It will be observed that at this stage the duty of accepting the judgment of the one General Council, which had as yet been held, is urged not on the ground of any formulated theory as to the infallibility of a General Council, but simply on that of the authority which necessarily belonged to an assembly so large and so widely representative, and whose members were actuated by a spirit of fidelity to the faith once delivered, and were eminent for personal piety and for their sufferings for the truth.

The same attitude towards the Council of Nicæa is implied in the words adopted at Constantinople in speaking of its confession of faith. They add their own confirmation to the faith of the Nicene Fathers, and decree that it shall stand. *Conc. Const.*, Canon i: Μὴ ἀθετεῖσθαι τὴν πίστιν τῶν πατέρων τῶν τριακοσίων δεκαοκτῶ, τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῆς Βιθυνίας συνελθόντων. But the manner in which the Nicene Confession is introduced at Chalcedon already befits an accepted and

established formula. Οἱ ἐνδόξοι ἔρχοντες καὶ ἡ ὑπερφύης σύγκλητος εἶπον· ἀναγινώσκέσθωσαν τὰ ἐκτεθέντα παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων τριακοσίων δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ πατέρων ἐν Νικαίᾳ συνελθόντων. *Conc. Chal. Actio Secunda.*

In the two following passages it is plain that 'General Councils' are a thing recognized and understood. The first is specially interesting from the distinction it draws between the authority of Holy Scripture and all ecclesiastical authority, and also between different degrees of the latter. "Quis autem nesciat Sanctam Scripturam canonicam, tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti, certis suis terminis contineri, eamque omnibus posterioribus episcoporum litteris ita præponi, ut de illa omnino dubitari et disceptari non possit, utrum verum vel utrum rectum sint, quidquid in ea scriptum esse constiterit: episcoporum autem litteras quæ post confirmatum canonem vel scriptæ sunt vel scribuntur, et per sermonem forte sapientiores cujuslibet in ea re peritioris, et per aliorum episcoporum graviores auctoritatem doctioremque prudentiam, et per concilia licere reprehendi, et quid in eis forte a veritate deviatum est: et ipsa concilia quæ per singulas regiones vel provincias fiunt, plenariorum conciliorum auctoritati quæ fiunt ex universo orbe Christiano, sine ullis ambagibus cedere: ipsaque plenaria sæpe priora posterioribus emendari; cum aliquo experimento rerum aperitur quod clausum erat, et cognoscitur quod latebat; sine ullo typho sacrilegæ superbix, sine ulla inflata cervice arrogantix, sine ulla contentione lividæ invidiæ, cum sancta humilitate, cum pace catholica, cum charitate Christiana?"—Augustine, *De Baptismo*, c. 3.

"In ipsa vetustate, unius sive paucissimorum temeritati primum omnium generalia, si qua sunt, universalis concilii decreta præponant; tunc deinde si id minus est, sequantur quod proximum est, multorum atque magnorum consentientes sibi sententias magistrorum."—Vincentii, *Lir. Common.*, c. 27. See other allusions to General Councils in chaps. 28, 29.

I pass on to give some examples of the language used about General Councils at the era when they were resorted to as the great means for healing the disorders of Christendom, which had been brought about by the corruptions of the Papacy and of the Mediæval Church. We may note the claims made by the Councils for themselves.

The Council of Pisa (A.D. 1409). Sessio XIV.: "Christi nomine invocato, sancta et universalis Synodus, universalem Ecclesiam repræ-

sentans, et ad quam cognitio et decisio hujus causæ noscitur pertinere, sancti Spiritus gratia in hac majori ecclesia Pisana congregata," etc. (Mansi, vol. xxix. p. 208).

The Council of Constance (A.D. 1415), Sessio IV. "Hæc sancta Synodus Constantiensis Generale Concilium faciens, pro extirpatione præsentis schismatis, et unione ac reformatione Ecclesiæ Dei in capite et in membris fienda, ad laudem omnipotentis Dei, in Spiritu sancto legitime congregata, ad consequendum facilius, securius liberius et uberius unionem et reformationem Ecclesiæ Dei, ordinat, disponit, statuit, decernit et declarat, ut sequitur.

"Et primo, quod ipsa Synodus in Spiritu sancto congregata legitime, Generale Concilium faciens, ecclesiam catholicam militantem repræsentans, potestatem a Christo immediate habet, cui quilibet cujuscumque status vel dignitatis, etiam si papalis existat, obedire tenetur in his quæ pertinent ad fidem et extirpationem dicti schismatis, et reformationem generalem Ecclesiæ Dei in capite et in membris."

Ibid., p. 257.

See also a sermon preached before the Council of Basle, De libera prædicatione verbi Dei (Mansi, vol. xxxi., especially pages 493, 494), where a proof is given of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit so assists the deliberations of a General Council as to confer infallibility on its decrees, independently of the character of its members.

To these I may add a passage from the famous Gerson (1363-1429): "Examinator authenticus et finalis judex doctrinarum fidem tangentium, est Generale Concilium. Deducitur hæc consideratio primitus auctoritate Generalis Concilii Constantiensis, cui forte par in duratione nullum fuit. Forma decreti sui satis habetur, et posita est in tractatu *de potestate ecclesiastica* et in opusculo, *An liceat appellare a papa?* Sumitur insuper ab evangelio cum ratione talis confirmatio; Christus fuit supremus et optimus institutor Ecclesiæ non deficiens in necessariis, qui et dixit: *Ecce vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem sæculi*. Oportuit igitur in Ecclesiâ relinquere regulam infallibilem pro fide servanda, et dubiis emergentibus terminandis, non autem reperitur in terris altera talis infallibilis regula, nisi Generale Concilium legitimè congregatum. Nam persona quælibet singularis de Ecclesiâ, cujuscumque dignitatis, etiam, Papalis, circumdata est infirmitate, et deviabilis est, ut fallere possit et falli.

De examinatione doctrinarum; Consid. prim." Cf. also his *De Sensu Litterali*.

It is evident that the difficulty of knowing whether a Council was to be held to be general or not, and the necessity of looking to the subsequent confirmation of the Church at large, did not present itself to the minds of those who used such language. The Councils themselves declared their own œcumenicity and infallibility.

NOTE K (p. 188).

DEAN CHURCH ON AUTHORITY.

The following passage from *The Oxford Movement*, by the late Dean of St. Paul's will help to give a clear idea of the position maintained in this essay in regard to the authority of the Church. I am also glad to claim for it his powerful support. "The creed and dogmas of the Christian Church are, at least in their broad features, not a speculation, but a fact. That not only the Apostles' Creed, but the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds, are assumed as facts by the whole of anything that can be called the Church, is as certain as the reception by the same body, and for the same time, of the Scriptures. Not only the Creed, but, up to the sixteenth century, the hierarchy, and not only Creed and hierarchy and Scriptures, but the sacramental idea as expressed in the liturgies, are equally in the same class of facts. Of course it is open to any one to question the genuine origin of any of these great portions of the constitution of the Church; but the Church is so committed to them that he cannot enter on his destructive criticism without having to criticize, not one only, but all these beliefs, and without soon having to face the question whether the whole idea of the Church, as a real and divinely ordained society, with a definite doctrine and belief, is not a delusion, and whether Christianity whatever it is, is addressed solely to each individual, one by one, to make what he can of it. It need hardly be said that within the limits of what the Church is committed to there is room for very wide differences of opinion; it is also true that these limits have, in different times of the Church, been illegitimately and mischievously narrowed by prevailing opinions, and by documents and formularies respecting it. But though we may claim not to be bound by the

Augsburg Confession, or by the Lambeth articles, or the Synod of Dort, or the Bull *Unigenitus*, it does not follow that, if there is a Church at all, there is no more binding authority in the theology of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. And it is the province of the divine who believes in a Church at all, and in its office, to be the teacher and witness of religious truth, to distinguish between the infinitely varying degrees of authority with which professed representations of portions of this truth are propounded for acceptance. It may be difficult or impossible to agree on a theory of inspiration; but that the Church doctrine of some kind of special inspiration of Scripture is part of Christianity is, unless Christianity be a dream, certain. No one can reasonably doubt, with history before him, that the answer of the Christian Church was, the first time the question was asked, and has continued to be through ages of controversy, *against* Arianism, *against* Socinianism, *against* Pelagianism, *against* Zwinglianism. It does not follow that the Church has settled everything, or that there are not hundreds of questions which it is vain and presumptuous to attempt to settle by any alleged authority."

NOTE L (p. 206).

ANGLO-CATHOLIC DIVINES ON THE CHURCH.

It will, I think, be interesting and useful to give a few examples under this head. In Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" arguments drawn from the general principles of law on which all human society is based, and common sense arguments (as we may term them), to the effect that the points on which the Puritans insisted were not of sufficient importance to justify their opposition to the existing order, and that their method of reasoning was unsound, overshadow to a certain extent considerations as to the intrinsic rightness of the Church's system. It is natural that it should be so, since he had the practical end in view of allaying Puritan disaffection. He therefore used the arguments which might be expected to appeal to the largest number of minds; and this had the happy result that he placed the defence of the Church on a singularly broad philosophical basis. Moreover, many of the questions at issue did not touch the essence of the Church's life, though antiquity, good sense, and tendency to edification

were on the side of her practice. Nevertheless Hooker makes it abundantly evident that he believed the main features in the form of the Church's polity to be Divinely appointed, in a higher sense and more express manner than the civil institutions of society are. In particular, the whole tenor of his argument in regard to the ministry of the Church is to the effect that in order to be lawful, its commission must be derived from those who have been empowered to admit to it by regular devolution of authority from the Apostles; and that its threefold order was established by Christ and His Apostles (see "Ecol. Pol.," bk. v., cc. 77, 78: and bk. vii.).

Yet this large-minded and careful thinker is afraid lest too absolute a conclusion should be drawn from his own argument. Hence he puts in this caution (Book VII. § 11; vol. iii., Part I., pp. 284, 285 in Keble's large edition):—

"Now whereas hereupon some do infer, that no ordination can stand but only such as is made by bishops, which have had their ordination likewise by other bishops before them, till we come to the very Apostles of Christ themselves; in which respect it was demanded of Beza, at Poissie, 'By what authority he could administer the holy sacraments, being not thereunto ordained by any other than Calvin, or by such as to whom the power of ordination did not belong, according to the ancient orders and customs of the Church; sith Calvin and those who joined with him in that action were no bishops:' and Athanasius maintaineth the fact of Macarius a presbyter, which overthrew the holy table whereat one Ischyra would have ministered the blessed sacrament, having not been consecrated thereunto by laying on of some bishop's hands, according to the ecclesiastical canons; as also Epiphanius inveigheth sharply against divers for doing the like, when they had not episcopal ordination; to this we answer, that there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination made without a bishop. The whole Church visible being the true original subject of all power, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops alone to ordain: howbeit, as the ordinary course is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways."

He goes on to consider one or two cases of extraordinary vocation.

Cosin's position will be clearly shown from the following sentences from his treatise published in 1652, entitled, *Regni Angliæ Religio Catholica, prisca, casta, defæcata* (ch. viii. init.).

“Ab avitâ patrum et antecessorum religione, qua Christianâ, qua Catholicâ, nullatenus recedimus; neque ab ullâ uspiam Ecclesiæ Catholicæ parte (in hac ipsâ Religione et Fide adhuc permanente) scissionem aut scissuram [fecimus nec] facimus. Eandem enim religionem, curam, cultumque Numinis Divini retinemus, qualem Ipse nobis Christus Verbo Suo, Apostoli eorumque vestigiis inhærentes Patres, exemplo suo et praxi commendarunt. Disciplinam ecclesiasticam, quantum maxime potuimus, ad antiquioris Ecclesiæ mentem revocavimus, omnemque vitæ licentiam et morum dissolutionem, quâ par erat severitate, latis legibus compescuimus.

* * * * *

“Fundamentis salvis, diversitatem ut opinionum, ita quoque rituum et cæremoniarum, circa res juxta enatas et minus necessarias, in aliis Ecclesiis, quibus nobis præsidendum non est, amice, placide, et pacifice ferre possumus, atque adeo debemus.

“Quinetiam reliquis ubicumque terrarum Ecclesiis Christiano nomine censitis, et vere Catholicam Religionem Fidemque profitentibus, si nos actu aliquando jungi prohibet sive distantia regionum, sive dissidia hominum, sive persecutio et dissipatio fidelium, sive aliud quodcumque obstaculum, semper tamen animo et affectu jungimur (id quod de protestantium præsertim Ecclesiis intelligi cupimus), reapse eum demonstrare parati, cum justâ aliquâ ratione demonstrandi occasio se obtulerit. Qualem ab illis vicissim animum et affectum nobis etiam demonstrandum instanter deprecemur.”—Ch. ii.; Cosin’s Works, vol. iv. pp. 348, 349, in Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology.

We may also refer, on the one hand, for his strong maintenance of the principles of the threefold ministry and succession from the Apostles to chaps 9–12, of same treatise, and to Sermon VI. in vol. i. preached A.D. 1626, at the consecration of the Bishop of Carlisle, especially pp. 92, 99, 100; and on the other to his comparison between the unfriendly treatment which the English Church had received from Rome, and the kindness of the continental Reformed Churches, in a fragment left among his papers, and published in the Appendix to the Funeral Sermon upon him by Basire, Archdeacon of Northumberland (iv. pp. 337, 338). Cosin’s conclusion from his comparison is, “In all which we ought no less to acknowledge them (the Reformed Churches), and to make no schism between our Churches and theirs, however we approve not some defects that may be seen among them.”

Next may be quoted the following from Thorndike's treatise, *The Right of the Church in a Christian State*, ch. v. §§ 56, 57 (Lib. of Anglo-Cath. Theology, Thorndike's Works, vol. i. part II., pp. 603, ff.

"I will not leave this point without saying something of their case that have reformed the Church without authority of Bishops; that have abolished the order, and vested their power—in which I have showed that they succeed the Apostles, as to their respective Churches, with dependence on the whole—upon presbyteries, or whatsoever besides; which to decline here, might make men conceive that I have a better or worse opinion of them than indeed I have." He then proceeds to consider what a Christian people ought to do if "destitute of pastors endowed with the chief authority left by the apostles in all Churches." His conclusion is that in such a case of necessity it would be right to institute a new ministry rather than to forego the advantages of a ministry altogether. He proceeds:—

"The consequence of all this is plain enough. The resolution of Gulielmus Antissiodorensis (William of Auxerre) among the School doctors, is well known and approved; that the order of Bishops, in case of necessity, may be propagated by presbyters, supposing that they never received power to do such an act, from them that had it. My reason makes me bold to resolve further, that, in the case which is put, Christian people may appoint themselves Bishops, presbyters and deacons, provided it be with such limits of power, to be exercised under such laws, as are appointed before, by our Lord and His Apostles; and that upon these terms, they ought to be acknowledged by the rest of the Church, whensoever there is opportunity of communicating with the same, provided that they, and their Churches, submit to such further laws, as the rest of the Church hath provided, for the further regulating of itself, according as the part is to submit to the determination of the whole; and that this acknowledgment of them would be effectual, instead of solemn ordination, by imposition of hands of persons endowed with that power which is intended to be conveyed by the same. Whereby I make not personal succession to be no precept of God—which if it were not, then no schism were necessarily a sin, and, by consequence, all that can be said of the society of the Church would be a fable—but commanded in order to another, of living in the society of a Church, and therefore not binding, when both are not possible, but the chief is." He proceeds to

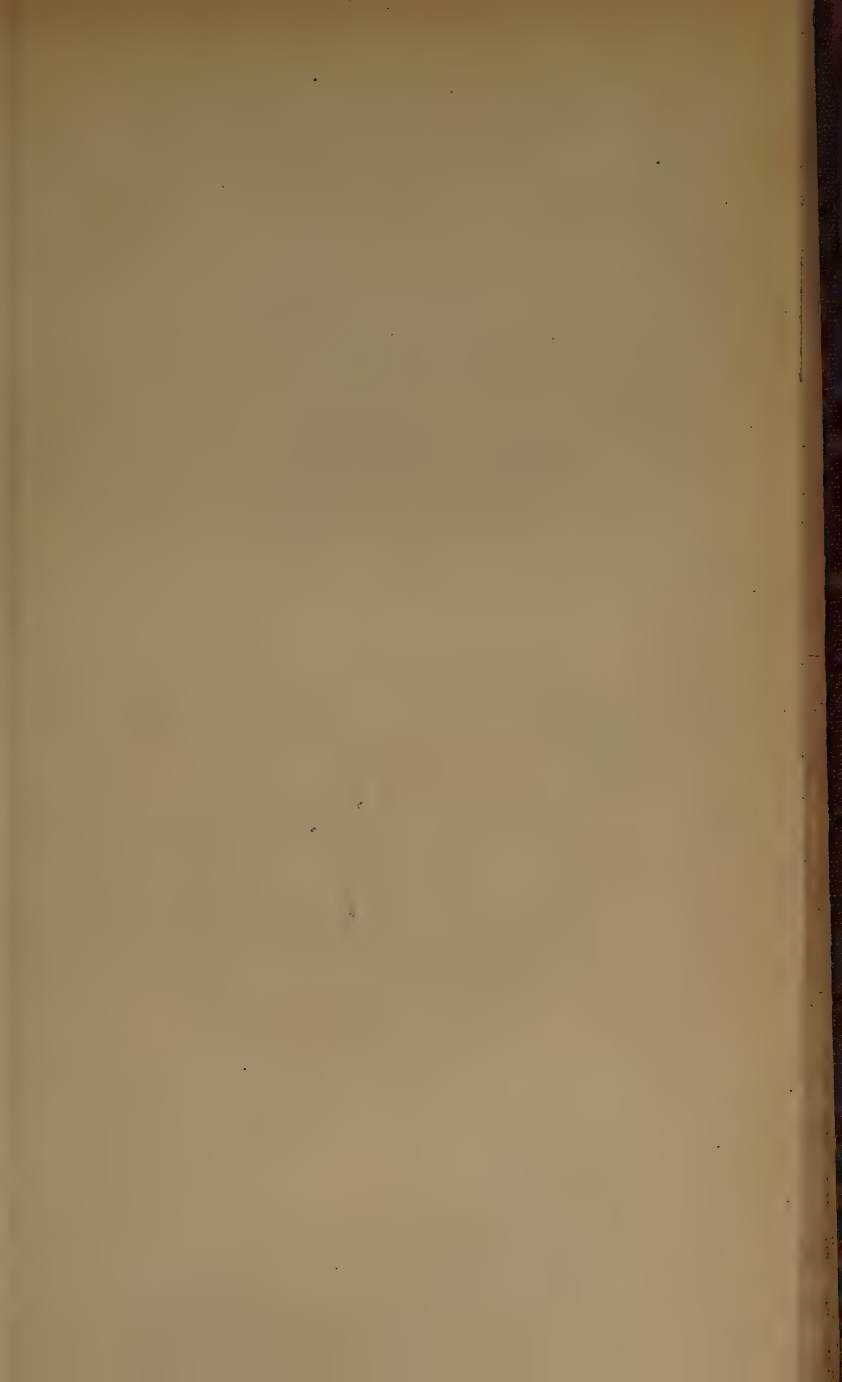
discuss the action of the foreign reformers, and neither wholly acquits nor wholly condemns them.

Lastly, let one or two passages be taken from Archbishop Bramhall.

"A just Vindication of the Church of England from the unjust aspersions of criminal schism. III. On the Moderation of the English Reformers.

"First, they did not, we do not, deny the being of any Church whatsoever, Roman or other, nor possibility of salvation in them, especially such as hold firmly the Apostles' Creed, and the Faith of the four first general Councils; though their salvation be rendered much more difficult by human inventions and obstructions. . . . Secondly, as our separation is from their errors, not from their Churches, so we do it with as much inward charity and moderation of our affections as we can possibly. . . . Thirdly, we do not arrogate to ourselves either a new Church, or a new religion, or new Holy Orders; for then we must produce new miracles, new revelations, and new cloven tongues, for our justification. Our religion is the same it was, our Church the same it was, our Holy Orders the same they were, in substance; differing only from what they were formerly, as a garden weeded from a garden unweeded" (Lib. of Anglo-Cath. Theology, Bramhall's Works, vol. i. pp. 197-9).

His friendly attitude towards Continental Reformed Communions is indicated, *ibid.* vol. iii. p. 243.



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